THE CONCORD SAUNTERER

I to the saunter toward the Holyland;
Till one day the sun shall shine more
brightly than ever he has done, shall
perchance shine into our minds and
hearts, and light up our whole lives
with a great awakening light, so warm
and serene and golden as on a
bank-side in Autumn.

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THE CONCORD SAUNTERER

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The front-cover drawing of Thoreau's Walden Pond cabin accompanied the first printing of *Walden* in 1854. This drawing was based on an original executed by Henry's sister Sophia. The passage about sauntering is from Thoreau's "Walking" manuscript, courtesy of the Concord Free Public Library. The likeness of Thoreau on the back cover is from an 1856 Benjamin D. Maxham daguerreotype, owned by the Thoreau Society.

THE CONCORD SAUNTERER, an annual publication of The Thoreau Society, seeks biographical, historical, textual, bibliographical, and interpretive articles relating to Henry Thoreau and his associates, Concord, and Transcendentalism. Submissions of all lengths are invited; shorter pieces not used will also be considered for the quarterly THOREAU SOCIETY BULLETIN. Contributions should conform to *The Chicago Manual of Style* for endnote documentation. Send two copies plus SASE to the Editor, THE CONCORD SAUNTERER, Department of English and Modern Languages, Wartburg College, Waverly, IA 50677; e-mail richard.schneider@wartburg.edu; phone (319) 352-8435. Decisions are reported within three months. Subscription to THE CONCORD SAUNTERER is by membership in the Society; see the back cover for additional information. THE CONCORD SAUNTERER is referenced in *American Literary Scholarship*, *American Humanities Index,* and the *MLA Bibliography*.

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Editor's Pages

In a November 2002 issue of *This Old House* magazine (no. 63, page 174), Thoreau's birthplace house on Virginia Road in Concord, Massachusetts, appears on the "Save This Old House" page. The house is offered for sale by the town of Concord for $1 (no zeros) to an appropriate buyer who will agree to "faithfully restore the house for the benefit of Thoreauvians everywhere and open the home for public tours on a regular basis." As of this writing, the fate of Thoreau's birthplace is still in doubt. Although the Town of Concord has restored the exterior of the house, the interior is still in need of major renovation. The Town of Concord has not yet decided whether to sell the house to one of the three-hundred-plus respondents to the ad or whether to continue to seek an arrangement with a willing non-profit or governmental agency. Both the interested citizens of the Thoreau Farm Trust and the officers of The Thoreau Society continue to work with the Selectmen of Concord toward a plan to preserve the house, but no conclusion is yet in sight.

It is ironic that the preservation of this historic house should be so uncertain at a time when Thoreau's own role as a voice for the preservation of nature has been so strongly recognized. Given Thoreau's status as the generally acknowledged father of American ecology, the birthplace of Thoreau can also legitimately be considered the symbolic birthplace of American attitudes toward conservation and preservation of nature.

Two of the essays in this issue emphasize the importance of this "green" Thoreau. In his keynote address to the 2001 Annual Gathering of The Thoreau Society titled "Thoreau and the American Passion for Wilderness" the distinguished environmental historian Donald Worster argues that Thoreau's advocacy of wilderness preservation is based not only on his idea of "absolute freedom and wildness" but also on attitudes of reverence and self-discipline that are too often forgotten in the American passion for wilderness. This passion, he argues, needs to be balanced by self-restraint, by citizenship, and even by—despite Thoreau's distaste for it—practical politics. Philip Cafaro's essay on "Thoreau's Environmental Ethics in *Walden*" follows his earlier essay on Thoreau's virtue ethics in the 2000 issue of *The Concord Saunterer*. In the present essay Cafaro offers a seminal approach to the ethical bases of Thoreau's environmental concerns, a topic which has not previously received extended discussion. Virtue ethics in general is, as Cafaro explains, "less about our duties and responsibilities to others, and more about our opportunities for personal development and flourishing." Thus an *environmental* virtue ethics "links environmental protection to human happiness and flourishing" both by demanding "restraint from us in our dealings with nature" and by offering "hope that we ourselves will lead better lives." This assessment of Thoreau's ethics seems right, so Cafaro's detailed explanation of Thoreau's

environmental virtue ethics should provide a solid foundation for further considerations of Thoreau's environmentalism.

The other three essays in this issue provide examinations of Concord life, of the thought of Thoreau's Transcendental colleague Emerson, and of Thoreau's influence on a twentieth-century Australian advocate of the simple life in nature.

Leslie Wilson's editing of the previously unpublished reminiscences of Concord citizen William Henry Hunt offers a fascinating peek into the everyday life of Concord in Thoreau's day. Hunt's is a success story of a farm boy who rose to prominence in his hometown society, leaving to the town of Concord upon his death a monetary bequest that provided for the building of the William Henry Hunt Gymnasium which still exists on Stow Street and continues to provide recreation for the citizens of Concord. Hunt's unconventional marriage and the suicide of his sister Martha also lift the veil on the darker side of life for women in nineteenth-century Concord. Hunt's marriage at age twenty to Elizabeth Baker, an older woman with a young son, set Concord tongues wagging and left his new wife vulnerable to the prejudices of Concord society. Hunt's sister Martha was a schoolteacher whose intellectual longings apparently found little support in Concord; she drowned herself in the Concord River on 11 July 1845, one week after Henry Thoreau had moved into his cabin at Walden Pond. Her suicide and the search for her body provided another Concordian, Nathaniel Hawthorne, with details for his description of the suicide of his character Zenobia in *The Blithedale Romance*. In addition to Wilson's introduction to Hunt's reminiscences and Hunt's own account, the reader should be sure to read through Wilson's endnotes, which provide additional details about Concord citizens who interacted with Hunt and his family.

Patrick Labriola's essay on Ralph Waldo Emerson's book *Nature* contains a brief but useful examination of how Emerson merged ideas about symbolism from the American Puritan past with ideas from the German Idealist philosophers to create his uniquely American Transcendental philosophy of nature. Robert Zeller's essay on the Australian Edmund Banfield and his affinities with Thoreau focuses on similarities between Banfield's autobiographical account, *My Tropic Isle*, and Thoreau's *Walden*. Readers interested in Labriola's study of Emerson or in Zeller's Australian connection will want to take another look at essays in previous issues of *The Concord Saunterer*: Labriola's essay "Germany and the American Transcendentalists: An Intellectual Bridge" in volume 6 (1998); and James Porter's essay "Thoreau and Australia: Sauntering Under the Southern Cross," accompanied by excerpts from the writing of Edmund Banfield, in volume 5 (1997).

Thanks, as always, are due to supporters of *The Concord Saunterer*. A

belated thanks to Bob Tamburri for permission to print his poem "Preservation" in the Editor's Pages of volume 9 (2001). Thanks also to the Cincinnati Museum of Art, Jeff Cramer and the Thoreau Society Archives at The Thoreau Institute, the Concord Free Public Library, Joel Myerson, and Robert Zeller for visual images in this volume. A special thanks goes to Robert Hudspeth for his generous assistance with advertising.

Finally, let me point toward significant anniversaries forthcoming in the next two years. In 2003 we will mark the bicentennial of Ralph Waldo Emerson's birth, and in 2004 we will mark the sesquicentennial of the publication of Thoreau's *Walden*. We will try to mark both milestones, but especially the latter, with appropriate publications in *The Concord Saunterer*. The 2004 issue will be a special issue focusing on *Walden* the book and on Walden Pond the place. Writers interested in contributing to this special issue should see the Call for Papers in the advertising section of the current issue.

RJS

American Wilderness
Asher Durand
Cincinnati Art Museum, The Edwin and Virginia Irwin Memorial

Thoreau and the American Passion for Wilderness

Donald Worster

"I wish to speak a word for Nature, for absolute freedom and wildness, as contrasted with a freedom and culture merely civil,—to regard man as an inhabitant, or a part and parcel of Nature, rather than a member of society" (Thoreau, "Walking," 205). Those blunt-nosed words from Henry David Thoreau shoot through American history like bullets from a high-powered rifle. Although they were aimed high and wide, and although they came from a man who felt marginal to his society, they have left an impact on our national culture. They have led to one of our most distinctive and important contributions to the human story: the preservation of wild nature.

By the end of the twentieth century the U.S. had given stringent protection to over 105 million acres of wilderness, along with millions of other acres protected in national parks, forests, and wildlife refuges. Currently, the national wilderness system includes 105,778,352 acres, of which 56% is in Alaska. (See http://www.wilderness.net/nwps/.) An area larger than California, that is wilderness preservation on a far grander scale than Thoreau could ever have dreamed. With few exceptions, those acres will never have to provide any crops, minerals, reservoir sites, timber, gravel, meat, soybeans, suburbs, or golf courses. Remarkably, in a nation that often seems driven solely by economic calculation, those lands have been put beyond the demands of the market economy.

Recently, it has become fashionable on both the right and left to attack that preservation movement. It has been called misguided, anti-human, elitist, and racist (racist for forgetting the Native Americans who once claimed those wilderness areas as their territory; see the critiques by Callicott and by Cronon). Some have even criticized wilderness preservation for alienating humans from nature—a contorted piece of reasoning that holds we are estranged from places we cannot farm, mine, or drive our cars through. In contrast to those charges, let me make it clear that I regard this setting aside of wilderness as one of our greatest accomplishments as a people. We have not yet spoken enough words for Nature nor preserved nearly enough of our territory in a state of wildness.

On 3 September 1964, the Wilderness Act became law, making it an official goal to designate wild lands on the public domain. The law did not erect a standard that was impossible to achieve. It did not insist that preserved areas must never have been walked across or ever used by Indians, blacks, or whites, or that they must meet a standard of absolute pristineness. All the act required was that the lands be "untrammeled by man, where man himself is a visitor who does not remain." (The Wilderness Act is Public Law 88-577, and the quotations are from Sec. 2 (c).) Wilderness was thus defined as a state of relative freedom—for nature as much as for humankind. It is land that is unconfined, not put into bondage or shackled by human demands.

Americans tend to assume that because of our intense fascination with wilderness we must have a near monopoly among the world's nations. But in truth most of the great wild areas of the earth lie outside U.S. borders. A few years ago a survey looked for areas of more than 400,000 hectares (or one million acres) that lacked any "permanent human settlements or roads," lands that were "not regularly cultivated nor heavily and continuously grazed." The survey did not rule out lands that were only "lightly used and occupied by indigenous peoples at various times who practiced traditional subsistence styles of life" (see McCloskey and Spalding). By that tolerant standard it found no fewer than forty-eight million square kilometers qualifying as wilderness, or about a third of the earth's land surface. (Forty eight million square kilometers is equivalent to twelve billion acres, an expanse larger than the Western Hemisphere). Fifteen million of those square kilometers are in Antarctica and Greenland—a wilderness of ice.

The U.S. ranks 16th on the world list in large wilderness areas, with 440,580 square kilometers (109 million acres), or 4.7% of its total area. Wilderness-rich countries include Russia, Canada, Australia, Brazil, the Sudan, and Algeria, all well ahead of the United States in large unoccupied, or at least unroaded, areas. But even heavily populated countries like China, India, Laos, Mexico, and Iraq have their empty quarters. China, for instance, despite its billion-plus human population, still has twenty-two percent of its territory in a more or less wild state, a higher percentage than the United States. Yet almost none of those countries has made substantial moves to protect their wild places. Why is that? Why have so few other countries joined us in the effort to protect lands "untrammeled by man"? Why have only the Nordic countries, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand followed our lead in designating any wilderness at all, and why has none of them done so on the scale of the United States?

Something in American culture loves the wild, and that passion is weaker in other countries. I believe that we need to go back to Thoreau in order to understand what that something is.

So much of what Thoreau wrote touched on the value of wild nature. For the sake of brevity I will focus only on that single brilliant essay, "Walking." Walter Harding and Michael Meyer call it one of the two best expositions of Thoreau's

philosophy (61). Robert Richardson tells us that in this essay is to be found "Thoreau's, and after him, America's, conservation ethic" (225). So it is a foundational document that we must try to penetrate.

It is not, however, an easy document to reduce to logical order or concise argument. Nowhere is Thoreau more complicated, cryptic, and contradictory. For example, he scorns the dull, tame literature of Europe while throwing Latin phrases and Dantean allusions at us right and left. He criticizes society's exploitation of nature but celebrates the conquest of America by the plowman.

Part of the confusion the essay generates may be traced back to its patchy origins. Piecing together journal entries from a three year period, 1850 to 1852, into a single lecture, Thoreau then split that lecture into two titles, "Walking" and "The Wild." Years later he rejoined the sundered halves for his publisher, *The Atlantic Monthly,* while suggesting that it might be divided again into two articles. Clearly, he couldn't make up his mind about the form the writing should take, nor could he make up his mind about some of its core ideas, admitting that he speaks in an extreme, one-sided way.

The essay may be read as a celebration of "the joys of walking." But it is far more than that. It is largely a justification of the extraordinary profession that Thoreau developed and practiced, especially in his middle and late years, a profession that he insists is worthy of his neighbors' respect. He bravely seizes on the image he has acquired in Concord of a vagrant, an idler, and turns it upside down. In truth, he insists, he is really a crusader on his way to the Holy Land, or the land of nature. Alternatively, he claims to be a member of the fourth estate of journalism, reporting on the wild. Or that he is a true American pioneer participating in the westward movement. Above all, he portrays himself as a man busy extracting a resource from the wild that civilization needs for its survival.

Despite those high vocational claims, he cannot resist poking a bit of fun at himself, acknowledging that he is only a half-hearted crusader who comes home every night and sleeps in his own bed. Most of his ridicule, however, is directed not at himself but at his fellow Concordians—at their daily jobs, and, most slyly, at the sloth with which they do them. All day, he notes, they sit in their shops with their legs crossed in idleness or boredom. Or if they are women, trapped in the confines of domesticity, they spend afternoons napping behind their respectable front doors.

Thoreau tells us exactly where he works as well as how hard he works. Every day he puts in a minimum of four hours of strenuous effort, covering long distances across a rugged terrain. His workspace reaches more than ten miles west and southwest of Concord and includes the towns of Acton, Stow, Boxborough, Maynard, Marlborough, Framingham, Sudbury, and Wayland. He avoids following any easy roads into that territory, the roads of business; instead, he sweats up and down hills, wades through bogs and swamps, cuts through pastures and woods where another human is seldom seen.

Within that great parabola of space, Thoreau claims to have found an abundance of wildness. "Two or three hours' walking," he declares, "will carry me to as strange a country as I expect ever to see." That's a fairly ambiguous statement, but he follows it by maintaining that he can walk all afternoon, starting from his own dwelling on Main Street, "without going by any house, without crossing a road except where the fox and the mink do; first along by the river, and then the brook, and then the meadow and the woodside. There are square miles in my vicinity which have no inhabitant" (212). Is he exaggerating? It may be hard to believe that in a part of North America inhabited by Europeans for over two centuries and by Native Americans for a few thousand years so much land still remained in a state of wildness. We know that Concord itself was heavily deforested by that date, but unless we call Thoreau a faker, and I do not, eastern Massachusetts must not have been an altogether domesticated terrain. There was plenty of wildness, old or new growth, available to the individual willing to exercise his legs.

In claiming a career as inspector of the wild, Thoreau is doing more than justifying himself to his readers. He is saying what no one else before him has said so emphatically: that wild nature is worthy of the same respect, devotion, energy, and time that taming the land or other "trammeling" occupations demand.

What product does Thoreau bring back from his excursions into the wild (or into "wildness" or "wilderness"— the difference in language seems to be largely a matter of scale)? The product he fetches home is nothing less than the essential material of human life. His images for that import all seem aimed at an agricultural community that expects the earth to yield something useful. The wild, he tells them, is fecund with useful products for the health-food stores and body shops of Concord: "From the forest and wilderness come the tonics and barks which brace mankind" (224). "The wild-wood covers the virgin-mould,—and the same soil is good for men and for trees" (228). "Give me a culture which imports much muck from the meadows, and deepens the soil" (237-38). "In wildness is the preservation of the world" (224). Like a conscientious farmer, Thoreau boasts of extracting health and sustenance from the earth, but particularly from those acres others have neglected. They turn out to be, surprisingly, the most vital areas on which civilization depends. Wilderness, Thoreau argues, is not a wasteland but a natural resource. It makes people stronger, in mind as well as in body. It feeds virtue. It makes people humble. It yields poetry and a philosophy that are independent and creative, free of a sickly artificiality.

Above all, those wild places can feed the people's hunger for liberty. In its opening sentence "Walking" announces that its central theme is freedom: "absolute freedom and wildness, as contrasted with a freedom and culture merely civil" (205). I will come back to that distinction in a moment, but notice the repetition of this pairing throughout. "If you ... are a free man, then you are ready for a walk" (206). "Absolutely free from all worldly engagements" (207). "Eastward I go only by force; but westward I go free" (217). "Sufficient wildness and freedom" (217). "Live free, child of the mist" (240).

Now let us attend to that distinction between absolute and civil freedom. It is not one that Thoreau originated; Rousseau, Locke, Hobbes, and even the Greeks anticipated him in European political philosophy. Society, they agreed, had to be invented and imposed on humans at some obscure point in the past; prior to that point people had been living in a state of perfect freedom. Laws were passed, guaranteeing certain limited rights, and those laws recreated a measure of aboriginal freedom—but it was a freedom always contrived, measured out, and circumscribed.

This notion of two kinds of freedom may have a more obscure and diffuse origin than academic philosophers. Note, for example, how it was used by that non-philosopher John Winthrop, in his selfjustifying book, *A History of New England* (1645): "There is a twofold liberty," Winthrop explained. There is natural liberty, "common to man with beasts and other creatures. By this, man ... hath liberty to do what he lists; it is a liberty to evil as well as to good" (38). But the second, and for Winthrop the better, kind of liberty is civil liberty, which derives from and depends on the legitimacy and authority of government. "It is a liberty," according to Winthrop, "to that only which is good, just, and honest" (39). No individual, he warns, should try to decide on his own what constitutes goodness or justice or honesty; it must ultimately be decided by God, although on earth it must be decided by the political authorities who are responsible for making and enforcing laws.

That was how the Puritans understood liberty—a dangerous idea unless it was vigorously supervised by society. Two hundred years after Winthrop, our wild man of Concord announced that the Puritans had it all wrong. The better kind of liberty, Thoreau tells us, thrives beyond the reach of the authorities, in the desert, the prairie, or "the darkest wood, the thickets and most interminable and, to the citizen, most dismal swamp" (228). And it is the solitary man who can find and retrieve that better sort of liberty from the wild. Nothing was more anti-Puritan in Thoreau's thinking than his insistence that freedom does not derive from government; on the contrary, it is threatened by government and must be defended from government's interference. To that warning he would add that not only does government stand in the way of "absolute freedom," but so also do "society," the "village," and indeed the whole accumulated body of convention and tradition.

In the deepest sense, then, wilderness was for Thoreau a political resource. Or perhaps it would be clearer to say that it offered an alternative to politics. Wilderness was an actual physical place where one could go to escape from politicians, the state, society, prejudice, authority—all the faces of unfreedom. From it one returned, at the end of the day, politically liberated.

Thoreau does envision a fearful time when "American liberty has become a fiction of the past,—as it is to some extent a fiction of the present" (233). I suppose he means a time when the last wild places will have disappeared, or a time when no inhabitants of the country will follow his lead in seeking the wild, when people will live wholly within society. Apparently, it was an inevitable future, for in this essay he makes no call to save wilderness from extinction, though later on

he did suggest that towns like Concord should set aside a few hundred acres of woods and leave them to grow up in an unmanaged condition.

A few hundred acres would seem mighty small to twentieth-century preservationists. The law of 1964 sets a minimum of 5,000 acres for designated wilderness; most of our protected areas are far larger than that, as large as the 9.7 million acres in Alaska's Wrangell-St. Elias National Park. But in contrast to modern preservationists Thoreau was most intent on finding a wild remnant on the edges of his predominately agricultural world. He wanted a wild that he could walk to from his dwelling, just as he wanted a freedom that lay near at hand rather than in the far north or on the other side of the continent.

To trace that Thoreauvian pairing of freedom and wilderness down through the subsequent years of American history would require more time than we have here. We would have to look closely, for example, at the historian Frederick Jackson Turner, whose interpretation of our national character depended on that same fusion. But for now a single example will have to suffice to show how Thoreau's hunger for absolute freedom, his disengagement from society and politics, and his defiant walking toward the wild, all come together in our own time. The late Edward Abbey, author of *Desert Solitaire* and other writings, stirred up a devoted following through his determination, like that of Thoreau, to recover absolute freedom. In one of his essays, "Freedom and Wilderness, Wilderness and Freedom," which was included in his 1977 book *The Journey Home*, Abbey hearkens back to the central theme of "Walking." He too fears that day when "liberty has become a fiction of the past." Thoreau was afraid of being caught in the deadening clutch of his neighbors' low expectations of life, or of being morally tainted by a distant government that condoned chattel slavery. But Abbey is afraid of a "technological termitorium," (233) an insect life where the powers that be stifle all dissent. "I see the preservation of wilderness," he writes, "as one sector of the front in the war against the encroaching industrial state" (235). For him as for Thoreau, the wild is a refuge where we can recover absolute freedom from a repressive civilization.

I cherish the brave words and bold challenges of both Thoreau and Abbey. But I have been noticing that their wilderness as absolute personal freedom idea quickly loses its appeal as we move beyond the borders of the United States. Even in neighboring Canada, they have only lukewarm support. The most thorough study we have to date of that different reception to the north comes from Marilyn Dubasak, who argues that "support for wilderness preservation as a general, long term goal [has] had much less appeal in Canada than in the United States. Canadian historical tradition does not contain the same degree of romantic veneration of land as a component of national character. In Canada, the vast northern wilderness and the perception of being a small population group dwarfed by a huge land mass makes it more difficult to credit the need to preserve wilderness" (204, 206).

This contrast between the U.S. and Canada goes back more than two centuries. When the American Revolutionary War broke out, thousands of men and women loyal to the English king fled across the St. Lawrence River to establish

Upper Canada, now Ontario. That event, many have argued, was the moment of divergence. Canadians henceforth saw themselves as the people who chose not to rebel against authority, the state, or the crown, and they rejected much of the libertarian rhetoric of America's Declaration of Independence—"life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." Whether French or English, they were skeptical of the American insistence on freedom from government interference. "Freedom," they believed, "wears a crown." Monarchy was not seen as an evil oppressor but as the only force that could protect Canadians from the feverish mobs to the south and insure a more appealing kind of freedom—"a freedom and culture merely civil," to quote Thoreau's distinction. According to W. L. Morton, "not life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness, but peace, order, and good government are what the national government of Canada guarantees" (68).

Canadians have been telling us that absolute freedom, like any absolute, cannot be absolutely good. Freedom must always be limited. If we tear down the institutions that define and limit freedom, it becomes a monster that self-destructs.

Civil freedom depends on civil law and civil institutions—on laws and legislators, on regulators and enforcers. It offers the protection of the group and the security of the police. It requires a culture of restraint. That is not a Puritan or reactionary way of thinking; it is the common sense of Canadians, Finns, Italians, indeed most of the world's societies, even of Americans when we are honest with ourselves. We too say that we are a nation of laws. Without laws and a law-abiding disposition in the citizenry, we realize that we will not find ourselves in a blissful relationship with the wild but in a world ravaged by human greed, lust, and corruption.

Reluctantly, I have come to agree that there must be a better way to go into wilderness than to search for natural or absolute freedom. The Achilles heel of the U.S. wilderness movement, I have come to fear, is the fact that so many wilderness lovers, in their heart of hearts, and despite so much effective political action, share Abbey's and Thoreau's distaste for politics, for the crafting and passing of laws. They may work for legal protection, but they are disappointed when they end up with a wilderness surrounded by fences and requiring hiking permits.

Put another way, our passion for wilderness has attached itself too strongly to a passion for personal freedom, the very freedom that has created a degraded environment. It leaves us caught in a devastating contradiction. Abbey rails against urban sprawl, economic growth, and nuclear poisoning; but he has no way to stop any of them without repudiating the absolute freedom that he craves. He calls for a steady-state economy in the same sentence that he calls for a "wide-open society." He wants to protect American borders against illegal immigration, which is swelling our population and pressing harder on our environment, but then he demands for himself the freedom to go on to the public lands in his own way, carrying a gun if he likes.

Most dangerously, a passion for wilderness that is a passion for absolute personal freedom leaves itself open to the most dangerous force at loose on the

planet today, corporate capital in a global economy. That force regularly insists that human greed and lust should be allowed more uninhibited expression. The workings of the market should be sacrosanct. Every seller and every buyer should be allowed to define his or her own behavior, and no village, community, or government should have the authority to interfere with market transactions.

When Thoreau wrote his essay "Walking," this new way of thinking was already in the air and, indeed, was breaking down an older American tradition of restraint, control, and a sense of the common good. From his college days onward Thoreau wrestled with the threats it posed to him and his community. He could never quite make up his mind about that new way of thinking, which Charles Sellers has called "the market revolution," for it both repelled and attracted him.

In his 1837 commencement address at Harvard College, on the theme of "the commercial spirit of modern times," Thoreau early expressed that ambivalence. He shrewdly noted that the commercial spirit (that is, the spirit of capitalism) "infuses into all our thoughts and affections a degree of its own selfishness; we become selfish in our patriotism, selfish in our domestic relations, selfish in our religion" (116-17). Avarice, he rightly worried, was now demanding freedom of expression, and the outcome would be moral degradation. Yet he also was persuaded that there was a brighter side to the commercial spirit: the call for more and more freedom for commerce was, after all, a call for—freedom. "We rejoice in it," he went on, "as one more indication of the entire and universal freedom which characterizes the age in which we live—as an indication that the human race is making one more advance in that infinite series of progressions which awaits it" (117-18).

But there is no such thing as "entire and universal freedom." "Freedom" is always divided into competing freedoms, and it is the work of politics to regulate that competition and establish a just balance among the competitors. Far from promoting "an entire and universal freedom," the unrestrained freedom of commerce would prove destructive of other freedoms—freedom from anxiety, freedom from power and exploitation, freedom from unequal life chances. It would destroy, indeed it has destroyed, the freedom of other species to live an independent existence and, except where stopped, it has invaded and destroyed the wilderness by oil drilling, coal mining, and cattle ranching.

Seeking a wilderness of absolute freedom, of freedom "entire and universal," has been a powerful strategy in many ways. Perhaps it has achieved what otherwise would have been impossible in the United States—a highly successful wilderness movement. But it has also brought costs and failures. At home it has encouraged an emphasis on self that can work against the natural world as well as against a just society. Abroad it has failed to gain much of an audience, for it often seems to people in other countries to be part of an American individualism, a pursuit of self-interest that lacks moral legitimacy elsewhere.

Thoreau did not foresee, nor could he have foreseen, those twentieth-century outcomes. He still lived in a culture of limits, however much they were

fading. He could trust freedom because he could trust himself and his neighbors to do little damage to the earth beyond cutting down a few trees. He died too early to witness the full destructive potential in the American dream of freedom. Today we can see more easily than he that the achievement of any of our environmental goals, from preventing pollution to achieving environmental justice to preserving biodiversity and wildlands, requires not more freedom, but more responsibility. It requires limitations. It requires far more restraint—self-restraint ideally, but community restraint if necessary. It requires citizenship. And it requires politics. The survival not only of wilderness but of an endangered planet is now at stake.

Thoreau, to be sure, is always more complicated than I have allowed. There is more to the essay "Walking" than either I or its author emphasized. Even while Thoreau invites us to walk with him toward "absolute freedom and wildness," he also hints at walking toward a wildness that offers not freedom but constraint. The Greeks called that nature "Kosmos, Beauty, or Order," he tells us; other cultures may have used different terms—the Creation, the Tao, and so forth. The various words all point to a nature which we did not create. A nature of law and order, of patterns to be observed and respected, of wisdom to be followed. We should walk toward it, Thoreau suggests, as to the Holy Land, in an attitude of reverence.

That other kind of walking demands lots of self-discipline, which Thoreau had in abundance. Simply going out into New England's weather every day of the year took prodigious physical discipline. It involved as well a considerable discipline of mind. On his daily walks Thoreau sought to improve his knowledge of how nature functions through hard study, admitting as he did that knowledge is always incomplete. "What is our boasted so-called knowledge," he asks, "but a conceit that we know something?" ("Walking," 239).

I believe that this other approach to walking— self-disciplined, deeply observant, humble, and reverential—led Thoreau not so much to cherish his own freedom as to develop a profound respect for the otherness of nature. Walking in that way today would encourage us toward a more ethical behavior in our relations with each other as well as with the earth. It may lead us toward a better argument for preserving and cherishing wilderness than the one we have relied on too much in the past. In walking with disciplined, attentive minds, with respect for the complexity and the otherness of nature, we may find the good people of the world more willing to travel with us, to seek, to value, and to protect what remains of the wild on a crowded planet.

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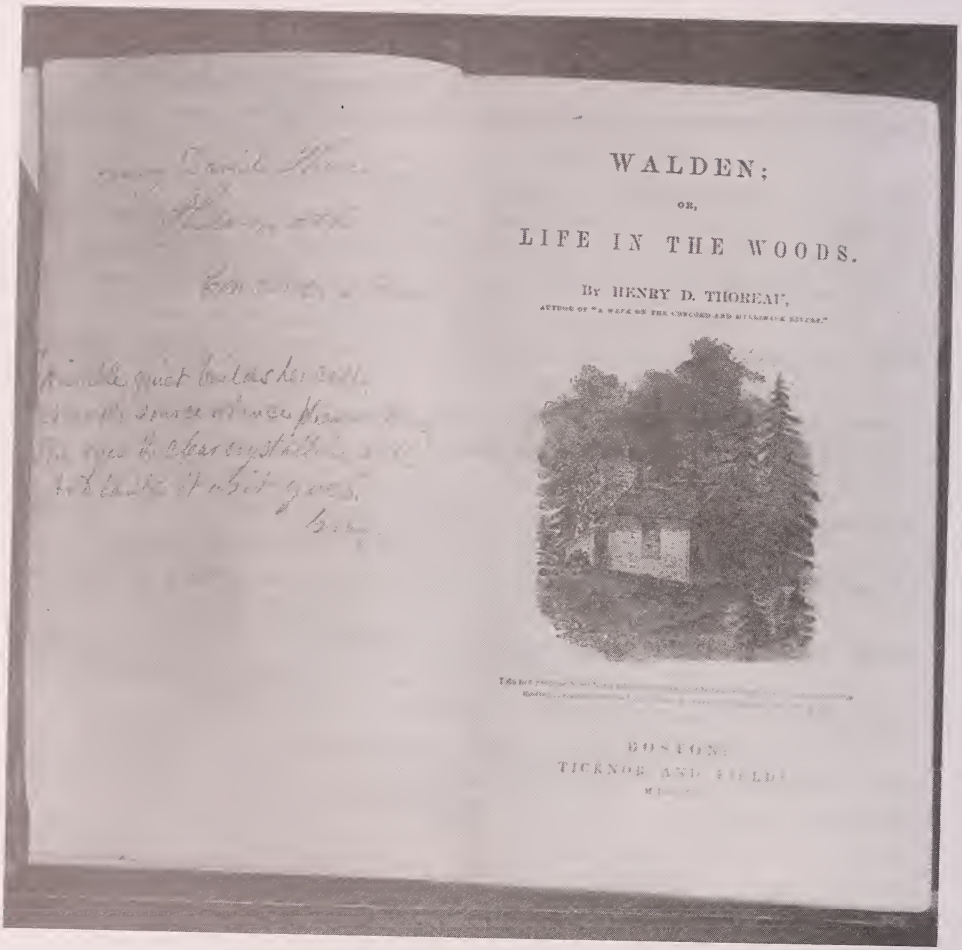
WALDEN;

OR,

LIFE IN THE WOODS.

By HENRY D. THOREAU,

BOSTON:

Title Page of *Walden*

(Daniel Ricketson's Copy)

Courtesy of The Thoreau Society, Lincoln, Massachusetts

Thoreau's Environmental Ethics in Walden

Philip Cafaro

Environmental ethics asks the question: how should people treat the rest of nature? It seeks, in the words of a leading environmental philosopher, to specify "duties to and values in the natural world" (Rolston, title). From its modest beginnings in a few journal articles and conference presentations in the 1970s, environmental ethics has grown to become an important subfield within academic philosophy, its growth spurred by the immense environmental problems posed by our modern world economy with its powerful technologies and rapidly increasing human numbers.

In developing a strong environmental ethics, I believe no thinker has more to offer us than Henry Thoreau. In particular, Thoreau is a leading critic of anthropocentrism: the view that only human beings have rights or "intrinsic value" and that other creatures are solely valuable as human resources and may be used any way we see fit. Most contemporary environmental philosophers believe that recognizing the intrinsic value of nonhuman nature is the key to creating a new ethics which will preserve the environment and all the many species with whom we share it.

Thoreau anticipates contemporary intrinsic value arguments, as I show below. But if this were all he had done, from a philosophical point of view he would be an interesting precursor and little more. On the contrary, Thoreau provides a detailed discussion of what recognizing nature's intrinsic value demands from us and practical suggestions for how we can live up to those demands. This discussion should prove valuable to environmental philosophers, who have been quicker to argue for intrinsic value in general terms than to specify exactly what follows from its recognition. Thoreau also describes specific techniques for paying attention to the nonhuman world and explores a variety of perspectives which help him "take wider views of the universe" (Thoreau, *Journal*, 418, 2 April 1852). In these ways, he suggests a more comprehensive non-anthropocentric outlook to complement a new non-anthropocentric value system.

Perhaps most important, Thoreau provides an example of how to lead a happy, flourishing life while still respecting nature. There is a great practical need to develop positive arguments for environmental protection. The recognition of nature's intrinsic value is sometimes seen as intolerably limiting, generating an endless string of environmental "thou shalt nots." Often, the general public views

environmentalists as kill-joys, willing to countenance any trade-offs of human freedom or happiness in pursuit of our aims (Naess 91).

Partly this is unavoidable. In defending wild nature, environmentalists are necessarily proscriptive. Recognizing intrinsic value in nature *does* limit its morally permissible use. Yet the writings of the great naturalists—and our own experiences—tell a story of joyful relationship with nature. The artist, the scientist, the poet, the hunter, the fisherman, all pay attention to nature and "capture value" which enriches their lives. This suggests that a recognition of nature's intrinsic value brings rewards to go with its proscriptions. It suggests that appeals to our *enlightened* self-interest may supplement environmental appeals based on "thou shalt nots."

In an earlier piece in this journal, I argued that Thoreau was a leading exponent of "virtue ethics": that half of ethics which talks less about our duties and responsibilities to others, and more about our opportunities for personal development and flourishing (Cafaro, "Thoreau's Virtue Ethics"). I contend that *Walden* provides a fully developed and inspiring *environmental* virtue ethics, which links environmental protection to human happiness and flourishing. This ethics demands restraint from us in our dealings with nature, but in return it offers us hope that we ourselves will lead better lives.

Thoreau thus points the way toward a positive environmental ethics. By recognizing nature's value, we enrich our own lives. By restraining our gross physical consumption, we are more likely to lead healthy and enjoyable lives, and promote conditions in which future generations can do the same. By devoting ourselves to higher pursuits than money-making, we act in our enlightened self-interest—with great benefits for the many other species with whom we share the Earth. These arguments need to be made along with intrinsic value arguments if we are to convince people to take the steps necessary to protect the natural world.

Fishy Virtue

Thoreau challenges conventional ethics in many ways, questioning both his contemporaries' values and their commitment to those values. One of his most important challenges is locating value directly in the non-human world, a theme already made explicit in *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers*. Early in *A Week*, Thoreau gives a detailed account of the various species of fish in the Concord River. This is one of those digressions which have annoyed so many readers. "We come upon them like snags," wrote James Russell Lowell, "jolting us headforemost out of our places as we are rowing placidly up stream or drifting down" (Harding 250-51). Thoreau might have integrated this account more smoothly into the narrative, of course, but another alternative would have been to ignore the fish entirely: to glide downstream without noticing them or to carelessly populate the deeps and shallows with undifferentiated or imaginary fish. This is the way of most boaters and most writers. This Thoreau will not do.

Instead, he describes the fish accurately and in detail: their appearance, behavior (nesting, feeding, migrations), habitat preferences, relative abundance, and more. These fish have many fine qualities: the bream "assiduously" guards its nest; the pickerel is "swift and wary." Thoreau plays up both their otherness and their closeness to us: the fish are at once "fabulous inhabitant[s] of another element, a thing heard of but not seen" and "our finny contemporaries in the Concord waters" (26-27, 30-33). These wonderful creatures are part of the same landscape as ourselves. We may know them if we will but look.

Much of this section has little explicit ethical content. At first there are no ethical arguments, just description continually bubbling up into little assertions of goodness: the "grace" of the bream, the "scholastic and classical" beauty of the chivin (26, 29). Finally, however, Thoreau comes to the plight of the shad and other anadromous, migratory fishes. Formerly found in great numbers in New England's rivers, they are now often blocked by dams. Here the definite "ought" of moral concern flows out:

> Poor shad! where is thy redress? When Nature gave thee instinct, gave she thee the heart to bear thy fate? Still wandering the sea in thy scaly armor to inquire humbly at the mouths of rivers if man has perchance left them free for thee to enter. By countless shoals loitering uncertain meanwhile, merely stemming the tide there, in danger from sea foes in spite of thy bright armor, awaiting new instructions, until the sands, until the water itself, tell thee if it be so or not. Thus by whole migrating nations, full of instinct, which is thy faith, in this backward spring, turned adrift, and perchance knowest not where men do *not* dwell, where there are *not* factories, in these days. Armed with no sword, no electric shock, but mere Shad, armed only with innocence and a just cause, with tender dumb mouth only forward, and scales easy to be detached. I for one am with thee, and who knows what may avail a crow bar against that Billerica dam? (37)

Our treatment of the shad is unjust—the fish obviously cannot "petition for redress," but they would be justified in doing so. The dams are not merely inconvenient or inexpedient for fishermen, downstream farmers, or other human beings; they are wrong, immoral, because of their effects on "mere Shad." One hundred and thirty years before EarthFirst! Thoreau suggests that the injustice is grave enough to justify a new kind of civil disobedience. We have here not the monstrous injustice of making a mere tool out of a man or woman, but the (equally?) monstrous injustice of extirpating whole species, whole forms of life, from the landscape.

Thoreau goes on to provide one of the earliest explicit calls for a non-anthropocentric ethics. The passage quoted above continues:

> Away with the superficial and selfish phil-*anthropy* of men,—who knows what admirable virtue of fishes may be below low-water mark, bearing up against a hard destiny, not admired by that fellow creature who alone can appreciate it!

Reserving all love and concern for humans—phil-*anthropy* (emphasis in the original) is both superficial, based on ignorance of what is below the surface, and selfish, an excuse for unjustified self-partiality. Thoreau neatly brings his point home with the "fish" puns.

Only here, in attempting to nail these charges down, does Thoreau use the word "virtue," making explicit what had been implicit in his earlier descriptions. Thoreau clearly employs the ancient conception of virtue as excellence here rather than the modern conception of virtue as a specifically *moral* goodness centered on dutifulness or altruism. A fish cannot act morally. But it can flourish as a good of its kind, with a bit of luck. The traits Thoreau praises in the bream and shad arguably are virtues, because they are the characteristic qualities which make these species what they are and which help them succeed in the natural economy of the Concord River.[1]

Thoreau's suggestion that certain piscine qualities are genuine virtues parallels recent attempts by Holmes Rolston III, Paul Taylor, and other environmental philosophers to justify the intrinsic value of non-human beings: to argue their basic goodness independent of their instrumental value to humans. These philosophers' arguments typically ground intrinsic value in various natural qualities, such as sentience (the ability to feel pleasure and pain), intelligence, goal-directedness, complexity, or beauty. All beings who have these qualities, it is argued, are good-in-themselves, regardless of what further good they may be to us. Recognizing their intrinsic value does not preclude all human use of these non-human beings, but it does set moral limits to that use. In the same way, Thoreau moves from facts to values and from description to prescription, as a (mostly) descriptive section concludes with an explicit assertion of fish virtue and the demands of interspecific justice.

Does Thoreau undermine his case for fishy virtue by speaking of the "humility" and "bravery" of fish, qualities which we typically associate with some degree of intelligence, and thus largely or exclusively with humans? Can fish be "innocent" if they cannot be guilty (can infants, or saints)? Thoreau writes "perchance" the shad do not know where rivers still run unobstructed by humans, but of course they do not have conscious knowledge which may be formulated into propositional statements and delivered in scholarly lectures. If Thoreau's argument rests on an inaccurate picture of what shad actually are, it necessarily fails to justify their moral considerability or any after hours crowbar work on the Billerica dam.

There are several ways a sympathetic expositor might respond here. One might argue that shad do possess literal, non-metaphorical knowledge, perhaps as populations, rather than as individuals. Through some combination of genetic programming and environmental cues (of which we are almost as ignorant as Thoreau) they do return to their native spawning grounds. They do "loiter uncertain" until some "intelligence" passes to them from the land or water, some cue which sends them up one particular river or another. They may fail to "know" of any undammed streams, if all the streams have been dammed, just as they "know" of home streams that have "proven" themselves good habitat in the past. The shad cannot be "in suspense" in our sense of conscious uncertainty as to probable outcomes, yet they are suspended in water, and suspended between the fates of continued flourishing and utter destruction. Recall the ancient conception of the virtues: those qualities which foster success and flourishing. Perhaps a less individually-based and conscious knowledge is the shad's equivalent of human practical reason, helping to further shad success as reason (ideally) furthers our own.[2]

Alternately, we might question the notion that other beings have value only to the degree that they resemble us. Maybe we should value them for their own essential qualities, which might be very different from ours. Typically, those skeptical of nonhuman intrinsic value argue that rationality, or the related ability to act morally, defines and limits moral considerability. Thoreau's admonishment that we are "fellow creatures" who "alone can appreciate" the varied diversity of non-human life suggests the following counterargument: if a true humanity involves the use of reason, that should lead to knowledge of the world around us, and thus to appreciation, and thus to restraint. If we truly value reason, it will show us a world where much besides reason has value. If we truly value diversity, we will have to jettison theories of value centered so firmly in our own nature. Those who argue that we are free to use the rest of nature any way we see fit because we are rational and able to restrain our natural selfishness, show, ironically enough, their own poorly developed knowledge and capacity for altruism.

Yet a third alternative is to reject hierarchical morality altogether. Perhaps the notion that the lesser capabilities of some beings give them a lesser value than more accomplished beings is mistaken. After all, despite the fact that we recognize that people have widely different capabilities, most of us see the rejection of hierarchical, inegalitarian morality among people as moral progress. In a recent study, Jane Bennett (53-55) suggests that Thoreau's love of biodiversity led directly to a rejection of hierarchical morality.

Thoreau sees a genuine heroism in the shad's efforts to spawn. It is a great story, but different from human greatness. The shoals of fish do not come armed with lance, or consciousness, or the human sense of personal importance. The shad, the philosopher will tell you, do not *act* at all, since they do not have conscious purposes. Yet we may watch them migrating up stream or hold one gleaming in our hands, imagine the vast distances they have traveled, and marvel.

They truly are "reserved for higher destinies": higher up New England's rivers and streams, to spawn (37). The shad's whole destiny is here on Earth, in this life. The same may be true for us, of course. In *Walden*, Thoreau will suggest that this is no reason to despair, for "heaven is under our feet as well as over our heads" (283).

Thoreau's discussion here shows some of the difficulties of moving beyond an anthropocentric value system. One must steer the course between an uncritical anthropomorphism which gives other beings bogus honorific qualities and a hypercritical reductionism which denies other beings all qualities which we cannot yet detect in them and undervalues those qualities that we do detect. Our ethics should be based on accurate knowledge of the world. Yet perhaps engagement is even more important than accuracy. Thoreau argues that we should work to know nature, however imperfectly, and thus move beyond the "superficial" views with which most people content themselves. Whatever lives of excellence—or mere complexity and strangeness—fish and other non-human beings can achieve, humans alone can fully appreciate them. We should do so, Thoreau says, for their sakes and ours. For if the Billerica dam and similar developments unjustly obstruct fish, they may also ruin the fishing and limit possibilities for future human knowledge, for poetry, and for fulfilling contact with wild nature.

"Thou shalt ere long have thy way up the rivers," Thoreau cries:

> up all the rivers of the globe, if I am not mistaken. Yea, even thy dull watery dream shall be more than realized. If it were not so, but thou wert to be overlooked at first and at last, then would I not take their heaven. Yes, I say so, who think I know better than thou canst. (37-38)

Was this the passage that jerked James Russell Lowell out of his boat, rather than the long description of the Concord River's fish species or Thoreau's other digressions? Certainly it bears a marked resemblance to the passage Lowell, as editor of the *Atlantic Monthly*, later censored in "Chesuncook": "It [a pine tree] is as immortal as I am, and perchance will go to as high a heaven, there to tower above me still" (the quarrel is recounted in Harding 392-95, which also quotes Thoreau's unanswered letter of protest to Lowell).

It is ironic that Lowell fastened so thoroughly, early and late, on Thoreau's derivativeness in condemning his literary achievements, given his own public suppression of Thoreau's nonanthropocentrism, one of the more striking and original aspects of Thoreau's work. Here was certainly one area where Thoreau pushed far ahead of his mentor Emerson. Here was a realm where, as he said, he looked toward the West and the wild, while Lowell and most of his civilized readers remained committed to the conventional anthropocentrism espoused on both sides of the Atlantic.

Higher Laws

Walden represents a more searching, sustained attempt to specify a non-anthropocentric ethics. Thoreau there repeatedly asserts the intrinsic value of nonhuman nature—whether in woodchucks, trees, or Walden Pond itself—and tries to justify those assertions. But *Walden* also discusses the benefits to people of recognizing nature's value and living accordingly.

The chapter "Higher Laws" develops a detailed and sweeping critique of hunting, fishing and meat-eating generally. As in *A Week*, Thoreau's wordplay identifies a key issue:

> No humane being, past the thoughtless age of boyhood, will wantonly murder any creature, which holds its life by the same tenure that he does. The hare in its extremity cries like a child. I warn you, mothers, that my sympathies do not always make the usual phil-*anthropic* distinctions. (212, emphasis in the original)

The "usual distinctions," of course, are between human suffering and the suffering of other sentient beings, which we discount, and between the ending of a human and a non-human life. Here Thoreau equates a true humanity with greater sympathy for all nature's creatures and with a deep appreciation of their existence. If causing unnecessary suffering is *prima facie* wrong, then we should avoid killing animals, since we arguably get no important benefits from killing them, or at least no benefits which outweigh their suffering. Similarly, if ending a life unnecessarily is *prima facie* wrong, then for the same reasons we should avoid killing animals.

Contemporary briefs against meat-eating, such as Peter Singer's animal welfare arguments or Tom Regan's animal rights arguments, can get quite complicated. The precise nature of animals, the degree to which their experience resembles human experience (particularly different species' varied capacities to suffer), the demands of reason and consistency, the exact wording of general ethical principles, are all debated in sophisticated philosophical terms. Thoreau instead appeals directly to experience:

> It may be vain to ask why the imagination will not be reconciled to flesh and fat. I am satisfied that it is not. Is it not a reproach that man is a carnivorous animal? True, he can and does live, in great measure, by preying on other animals; but this is a miserable way,—as any one who will go to snaring rabbits, or slaughtering lambs, may learn. (216)

Such activities are literally miserable—they cause terror, pain and suffering—and we can see this if we look. Here we see Thoreau's ethical method: simplify your life and pay careful attention to your experience to know the effects of your actions. If we do this, he believes, we will be much more likely to *see* what is right or wrong. At the very least, we will better understand the trade-offs our actions necessitate, for ourselves and others, and whether our actions conform to our principles.

There is a lot to be said for this method. No argument one might give about general ethical principles and the nature of pigs or chickens could take the place of actually visiting a modern swine or poultry breeding facility and seeing how the animals are kept. Thoreau's phrase "it may be vain to ask" perhaps suggests some skepticism about reason's ability to fully answer our ethical questions. Alternatively, it might show Thoreau's faith in our ethical intuitions. Either of these reasons, or both, may help explain why Thoreau does not develop detailed philosophical arguments here.

Another reason is *Walden's* general focus on personal excellence, rather than on our duties to others. In line with this, Thoreau argues against meat-eating by discussing its effects on individuals' happiness and personal development. Meat-eating is expensive, he asserts, and also filthy. It is much easier to clean up after a vegetarian meal (214). Carnivory thus wastes time and resources. Once again, an appeal to experience is key: "Having been my own butcher and scullion and cook, as well as the gentleman for whom the dishes were served up, I can speak from an unusually complete experience" (214).

True, fishing and hunting do serve to introduce many children to the woods, furthering an interest in nature they might not otherwise develop. For this reason, these are good activities for youth: "We cannot but pity the boy who has never fired a gun; he is no more humane, while his education has been sadly neglected . . . . Such is oftenest the young man's introduction to the forest, and the most original part of himself" (212). But our knowledge and acquaintance with nature's creatures should deepen over time. By directly participating in killing, a boy comes to understand what killing is. This allows him, for the first time, to act humanely, by consciously deciding not to kill. And by the time he does this, he has better reasons to be in the woods. The hunter, Thoreau believes, should evolve into a poet or naturalist and put aside his gun (213).

Experience also teaches us that meat-eating is not necessary. It isn't necessary for health, because we can sustain an active, healthy life on a vegetarian diet (9). It isn't necessary for dietary variety, because we can do without such variety; indeed, gourmandising takes us away from life's more important goals. Here Thoreau segues into the more general theme that limiting and disciplining our appetites rather than giving in to them is conducive to the higher human pursuits:

> I believe that every man who has ever been earnest to preserve his higher or poetic faculties in the best condition has been particularly inclined to abstain from animal food, and from much

> food of any kind . . . The gross feeder is a man in the larva state; and there are whole nations in that condition, nations without fancy or imagination, whose vast abdomens betray them. (214-15)

Does Thoreau overstate his case here? Not *every* earnest man or woman has acted thus. Plenty of writers and artists have indulged mightily in sensual pleasures, while still striving to preserve their "higher faculties"—and some few have created great poetry and art into the bargain. Many others have believed that a moderate indulgence in these pleasures, not asceticism, was the proper way to enhance their higher faculties. Thoreau cannot prove either group wrong. Yet just as clearly, "gross feeding" (and even more, hard drinking) has undermined many talented men and women. Furthermore, many of us do fail to explore life's higher or more challenging activities due to our satisfaction with lower ones. We sacrifice the greater to the less. As Americans' waistlines continue to expand and we debate whether to sacrifice some of our most spectacular wilderness areas to oil and gas development, Thoreau's criticism of "nations whose vast abdomens betray them" rings true.

In my experience, Thoreau's distrust of bodily pleasures and his asceticism are unpopular with many contemporary readers who are otherwise sympathetic to his ethical views. We are quite a bit farther removed from our Puritan forebears than was Thoreau's generation. Still, Thoreau might be right. If ascetic forbearance does enhance our creative powers, as both Eastern and Western traditions have taught, it might be worth the trade-off in happiness, conventionally defined. Especially if we accept Thoreau's ranking of higher and lower pursuits, and devote ourselves to the former. Similarly, if contempt or indifference to bodily pleasures helps us to live a "life according to principle," as the Stoics, Kant and many other moralists have taught, it might be worth the trade-off in pleasures forsworn. Especially if we accept Thoreau's high valuation of principled action and his analysis of how sensuality and greed often cause us to fall short of it (see "Life Without Principle").

It should be pointed out, though, that we can argue against meat-eating without embracing asceticism. An alternative position, not developed by Thoreau but readily defended, is that we may avoid causing unnecessary suffering by enjoying a varied and nutritious vegetarian diet. When we factor in the health benefits of vegetarianism, both morality and enlightened self-interest may suggest the same conclusion. The more general point is that we may argue for restraining consumption in different areas of our lives from a wide variety of positions concerning what constitutes the good life. Many readers find it easy to reject Thoreau's asceticism, but harder to shrug off his demand that each of us define his or her own enlightened self-interest and act accordingly.

But *should* we eschew carnivory, regardless of our self-interest? Otherwise put: Is vegetarianism "morally required"? As Thoreau suggests, it depends on how we define humane behavior. If we equate a true humanity with sensitivity to others' suffering and a focus on higher human activities, we are unlikely to eat

meat. If we equate a true humanity with power over others and our ability to manipulate the world to fulfill our desires, we will eat whatever we want to eat. Once again, the higher we pitch our humanity, the less likely we will be to use that humanity as an excuse to lord it over the rest of creation.

A further point: while morality cannot demand complete consistency from us, morality's claims do rest on a general presupposition of consistency. For example, it is inconsistent *and therefore wrong* for me to say that I may act one way in a particular situation, but that someone else may not act in the same way in exactly the same situation. "Higher Laws" is followed by a chapter titled "Brute Neighbors," in which Thoreau describes the groundhogs, squirrels and blue jays whom he got to know at the pond. They are presented as persons and this animal personality will have to be taken into account when he considers whether to eat them or other animals like them (on the importance of the category "person" in ethics see Kohak). The juxtaposition of these chapters suggests an inconsistency between knowing and loving animals, on the one hand, and eating them, on the other. Similarly, the chapter preceding "Higher Laws," "Baker Farm," recounts Thoreau's lecture to the Irish immigrant John Field on the benefits of low consumption, including vegetarianism, in allowing a poor man ample free time to fish, skylark, and enjoy life. The chapter juxtaposes the encounter with Field with examples of the enticing uses to which Thoreau puts his free time. The bracketing of "Higher Laws" by "Baker Farm" and "Brute Neighbors" is surely deliberate, and meant to supplement the moral arguments for vegetarianism given there. To the demand that we discipline our appetites in the name of higher principles, Thoreau adds considerations from our enlightened self-interest and an implicit appeal to consistency which support the same conclusion.

In "Higher Laws," Thoreau's discussion of hunting and vegetarianism broadens out into a consideration of some of the most important and vexed issues in general virtue ethics. What attitude should we take toward our appetites? Is reason properly "the slave of the passions" (Hume), their absolute master (Kant), or something in between? How should we balance the pursuit of pleasure, moral commitment, and the other components of a good human life? In "Higher Laws," the logic of Thoreau's argument for vegetarianism—his attempt to nail down its justification and strengthen its moral force—leads finally to a very ascetic, demanding and "moralistic" position. Yet we cannot take this as his final word on these questions. For elsewhere in *Walden*, Thoreau speaks positively about physical pleasure and a sensual appreciation of the world. He writes that in youth he lived "a purely sensual life" and that "[I] inhabited my body wholly." Elsewhere Thoreau argues against an overly organized or consistent life and for spontaneity and skylarking. "I love a broad margin to my life," he writes. "The natural day is very calm, and will hardly reprove [our] indolence" (111-12). All this suggests that we must look at *Walden* as a whole in order to understand Thoreau's conception of the good life and the proper roles of pleasure and sensuality within it. It also suggests

that Thoreau is more interested in opening up these key virtue ethics questions and forcing his readers to answer *and live* their particular answers than he is in providing final answers to the questions themselves.

There are ethical dangers in taking too negative a view of our natural appetites, which we can see more clearly if we follow the argument in "Higher Laws" a little further. "I have found repeatedly, of late years, that I cannot fish without falling a little in self-respect," Thoreau writes. "There is unquestionably this instinct in me which belongs to the lower orders of creation" (213-14). Fishing teaches him about fish and the other living things in the pond. It is sometimes an occasion for meditation or poetic vision. Yet the instinct, beneficial in these ways and perfectly natural, is a "lower" one. Similarly, meat-eating is part of our nature; done in moderation, it is pleasurable and does not harm our health. Still, Thoreau asks, "Is it not a reproach that man is a carnivorous animal?" We have ideals which point beyond what feels good to us and we should follow them: "No man ever followed his genius till it misled him. Though the result were bodily weakness, yet perhaps no one can say that the consequences were to be regretted, for these were a life in conformity to higher principles" (216).

Faced with natural inclinations that he feels must be overcome, Thoreau decries appetite. This impulse finds its logical end in the hope of totally transcending desire:

> Who has not sometimes derived an inexpressible satisfaction from his food in which appetite had no share? I have been thrilled to think that I owed a mental perception to the commonly gross sense of taste, that I have been inspired through the palate, that some berries which I had eaten on a hill-side had fed my genius. (218)

Here we have the familiar idea of a life of pure thought and appreciation which does not partake of the grossly sensual. It involves a desire to make contact with the world with the finer sense of sight, perhaps, but not with touch. As nearly as possible the *mind* should touch the world, not the body. Thought is good, while appetite is unqualifiedly bad, an inferior (perhaps polluted) form of consciousness:

> Not that food which entereth into the mouth defileth a man, but the appetite with which it is eaten. It is neither the quality nor the quantity, but the devotion to sensual savors; when that which is eaten is not a viand to sustain our animal, or inspire our spiritual life, but food for the worms that possess us . . . . The wonder is how . . . you and I, can live this slimy beastly life, eating and drinking. (218)

Precisely here is where Thoreau goes wrong, I think. Rejecting our own animal nature as "slimy and beastly" undermines attempts to locate intrinsic value

in the beasts. And saying that "the food that entereth in" is not the point undermines arguments against meat-eating based on animals' own intrinsic value. This overemphasizes the importance of our own purity versus the welfare of other beings and overemphasizes mental states at the expense of physical realities. Here, arguably, appetite should be disciplined in the name of morality, and the effects of our actions on us should take a back seat to considerations of their effects on others.

Thoreau goes wrong here too in denying his sensual side, simply because it can lead him astray. This is an old mistake of philosophers, who often forget that reason can also lead us astray. Against such views we must remember first that it is possible to step back from desire and pleasure by making a reasonable place for them within our lives. Our sensuality need not lead us astray, even though it sometimes does. Second, the senses are also means to knowledge, working together with reason to teach us about nature. So an extreme anti-sensualism will likely cohere badly with an environmental ethics which seeks to connect with nature. And third, sensual enjoyment is part of living a full and happy human life. Thoreau elsewhere acknowledges this while picking huckleberries, for example, or swimming in the pond, or enjoying his rest at the end of a long day hoeing beans.

Thoreau is right to argue against gross sensuality and gluttony and right to ask us to step back from our desires and moderate our appetites where appropriate. But we must not dilute moral arguments by making our appetites, and not the things affected by them, the sole objects of our concern. And we must remember that our nature is partly a physical nature which is not intrinsically evil and which generates reasonable claims to use and enjoy the Earth. Like the mythical Antaeus, we too decline when we fail to touch our mother the Earth not just with our minds, but with our bodies (155). A position which recognizes these points will avoid the implausible otherworldliness and dangerous solipsism of Thoreau's more extreme denials of physical desire and appetite. It is also more likely to win converts to environmental ethics.[3]

The Bean-Field

The chapter "The Bean-Field" moves beyond a concern to avoid directly killing individual animals to a concern for preserving their habitat and the wild landscape generally: in contemporary terms, from an animal rights ethics to a true environmental ethics. In order to earn some needed cash, Thoreau planted two and a half acres of Emerson's lot to beans. "This was my curious labor all summer," he writes: "to make this portion of the earth's surface, which had yielded only cinquefoil, blackberries, johnswort, and the like, before, sweet wild fruits and pleasant flowers, produce instead this pulse" (155). Once again, as in "Higher Laws," simplification and attentiveness to his experience allow Thoreau to see ethical issues where others might see only questions of economic expediency. For

he knows this landscape well, as a locus of beauty and value independent of his own uses. This complicates things.

"What shall I learn of beans or beans of me?" Thoreau continues (it was his *curious* labor all summer). For one thing, he learns the farmer's and gardener's common experience of dividing the world up morally based on its utility for whatever he is trying to grow:

> My auxiliaries are the dews and rains which water this dry soil, and what fertility is in the soil itself, which for the most part is lean and effete. My enemies are worms, cool days, and most of all woodchucks. The last have nibbled for me a quarter of an acre clean. But what right had I to oust johnswort and the rest, and break up their ancient herb garden? (155)

Just as "Higher Laws" begins with an anecdote about killing and eating a woodchuck, the first paragraph of "The Bean-Field" begins with a conflict with woodchuck "enemies." The chapter's point becomes clearer when we realize that Thoreau takes this "rights" question seriously—he believes that a woodchuck and a person can each have rights—and that he attempts to answer the question over the course of the chapter.

What justifies appropriating part of the landscape and displacing other intrinsically valuable beings? Perhaps the only convincing answer, once we have fully awakened to the moral issue, is necessity. Thoreau suggests this answer (and the Bible's well-known story of how this necessity came about) when he asks, early on: "But why should I raise them?" and immediately responds: "Only Heaven knows" (155). It is simply our human lot here on Earth. Thoreau must "produce this pulse" if he is to keep his own pulse going. We also are intrinsically valuable beings, and we need to eat to live. This justifies *some* displacement of nature, which can be minimized by taking only what we need.

For those who feel the force of nature's intrinsic value, this is the most important part of a responsible answer. Take what you need, but only what you need. Live simply, so that *non-human* others may simply live. Ecologists and conservation biologists have begun to quantify the price that other living beings pay for human consumption. According to one calculation, "humans now control 40 percent of the planet's land-based primary net productivity, that is, the basic plant growth that captures the energy on which everything else depends" (Vitousek 368). The directness of Thoreau's situation—clearing land to plant a crop, trapping out woodchucks he knew personally in order to protect his beans—forced him to confront the issue starkly. By fronting the problem on his own sacred ground, he was more likely to come up with a generous answer. And by attending to his own experience and distinguishing true needs from superfluous wants, he was *able* to answer generously.

At the same time, even this justification, the strongest we can give for displacing wild nature, cannot disguise the essentially aggressive nature of the whole process. Nor should it. Whatever we do about this, we should at least recognize that violence and displacement are part of what support us. Thoreau describes his labor as "self-respecting," or selfish, as it must be to some extent (155). He is clearly having fun when he writes of engaging in "a long war, not with cranes, but with weeds," but I think the comparison is made only partly in jest (161). Recognizing aggression and displacement is the first step toward limiting their extent and understanding the deeply tragic nature of life on Earth. Both the action and the understanding are part of a mature response.

"Only Heaven knows" why we must take life in order to live and work our will on the Earth. But if it is natural to do this, it is also natural to put up our hoes sometimes and simply appreciate nature as it is. Working in his little field, Thoreau heard brown thrashers singing in the trees, saw nighthawks circling overhead on sunny afternoons, and disturbed "outlandish"-looking salamanders from their rocky hiding places. "When I paused to lean on my hoe," he writes, "these sounds and sights I heard and saw any where in the row, a part of the inexhaustible entertainment which the country offers" (159-60). This is the moment, when we pause in our own purposive work, when we can appreciate nature's intrinsic value. This is also the moment when we can recognize the higher uses of nature: those of the poet, the painter, the scientist, or any of the others who put aside economic activity for a time in order to know, create, or experience the world in a richer way.

If cultivation leads us to value agricultural improvements and count our yields, pausing in our cultivation may lead to a different sort of accounting and valuation:

> And, by the way, who estimates the value of the crop which Nature yields in the still wilder fields unimproved by man? The crop of *English* hay is carefully weighed, the moisture calculated, the silicates and the potash; but in all dells and pond holes in the woods and pastures and swamps grows a rich and various crop only unreaped by man. (158)

The answer is that very few people as yet estimate or appreciate wild nature's intrinsic value. We are too busy about our beans. If we can recognize value outside ourselves, we will be more likely to leave some of wild nature alone. Just as important, we will be able to "reap" this wild "crop" which we have hitherto let go to waste through the various methods of higher appreciation modeled for us in *Walden*.

This suggests a further way in which some human appropriation of nature may be justified. We are the only creatures who can understand and celebrate what we see. Through poetry, art, natural history and science, we can be nature's storytellers. We can also consciously choose to allow these stories to continue. Even at work in "The Bean-Field" Thoreau continues to note the plants and animals

around him, and in other chapters they rightly take center stage. This, he suggests, justifies his own presence at Walden Pond. Rather than justifying the unlimited human appropriation of wild nature by appeal to our superior reason, Thoreau indicates that only such higher uses of reason justify its limited appropriation. Reason in service to unnecessary or unlimited consumption is no longer a superior faculty and justifies nothing.

Thoreau believes we must move beyond economic abstractions to economic experience to order our personal economy and further our self-development and happiness (for Thoreau on economy see Cafaro, "Thoreau and the Place of Economy," and Neufeldt). But such attentiveness also opens up deep issues concerning the meaning of work and the proper relation between our human economy and the economy of nature. Already in the second sentence of "The Bean-field" Thoreau writes: "What was the meaning of this so steady and self-respecting, this small Herculean labor, I knew not. I came to love my rows, my beans, though so many more than I wanted. They attached me to the earth, and so I got strength like Antaeus" (155). *Walden* more than hints that Thoreau often found hoeing beans tedious drudge-work. Yet it also tells us that he came to love his beans and his bean-field, as the hot sun baked it into his head that his strength really did come from nature, both from nature's bounty and from its demands. Here and elsewhere, Thoreau suggests that we too may come to love our work itself rather than the salary it provides us and that this is one key to living a happy life. We too may come to love the land, both for the sustenance it provides, the basis of any strength that we can attain, and for all that it provides that is *not* specifically for us, including its spontaneous, wild productions.

John Locke, in a famous attempt to justify the institution of private property, felt compelled to argue for the relative unimportance of nature's contribution to human wealth and sustenance:

> I think it will be but a very modest Computation to say, that of the *Products* of the earth useful to the Life of Man, nine-tenths are the *effects of labour*: nay, if we will rightly estimate things as they come to our use, and cast up the several Expenses about them, what in them is purely owing to *Nature*, and what to *labour*, we shall find, that in most of them ninety-nine hundredths are wholly to be put on the account of *labour*. (296)

This is hardly a "modest computation," and not just because it casually leaves nature's contribution vague by a factor of ten. But in its reliance on a particularly narrow criterion of use to define value, Locke's statement well reflects standard anthropocentric attitudes in his time and ours. We and our work are all-important.[4]

Thoreau, looking out the door of his shack and across his bean-field on a rainy day, comes to a different conclusion concerning the works of man and nature:

> While I enjoy the friendship of the seasons I trust that nothing can make life a burden to me. The gentle rain which waters my beans and keeps me in the house to-day is not drear and melancholy, but good for me too. Though it prevents my hoeing them, *it is of far more worth than my hoeing*. If it should continue so long as to cause the seeds to rot in the ground and destroy the potatoes in the low lands, it would still be good for the grass on the uplands, and, being good for the grass, it would be good for me. (131, emphasis added)

As our economic lives become more complex and specialized and our surroundings become more managed and humanized, Locke's attitude comes naturally, while Thoreau's recedes. Environmental ethicists may argue for nature's intrinsic value, but the experiential grounding for that belief fades. But when we eat food from our gardens, gather wood for the evening fire on a camping trip, or pick huckleberries, these actions both confirm the fact and symbolize nature's goodness. We then know ourselves as inextricably dependent on nature, regardless of any calculations concerning relative contributions.

From this knowledge should come a feeling of gratitude for the Earth's gifts, Thoreau believes, and a belief in the rightness of nature's cycles of work and rest, growth and harvest. Finally, there should come happiness and even joy at playing one's part within these cycles:

> Husbandry was once a sacred art; but it is pursued with irreverent haste and heedlessness by us, our object being to have large farms and large crops merely . . . . We are wont to forget that the sun looks on our cultivated fields and on the prairies and forests without distinction. They all reflect and absorb his rays alike, and the former make but a small part of the glorious picture which he beholds in his daily course. In his view the earth is all equally cultivated like a garden. Therefore we should receive the benefit of his light and heat with a corresponding trust and magnanimity. What though I value the seed of these beans, and harvest that in the fall of the year? . . . . These beans have results which are not harvested by me. Do they not grow for woodchucks partly? . . . . Shall I not rejoice also at the abundance of the weeds whose seeds are the granary of the birds? (165-66)

Such acceptance and rejoicing are rare in our society, Thoreau believes. Yet the hope remains that a genuine gratitude for our lives and sustenance can occur in the

pause from grasping, calculating and desiring. It occurs when we look up from our work and notice a hawk cutting the air or in a simple prayer of thanks before a meal. In such acts Thanksgiving becomes not a once-a-year formality but a remembrance of the goodness and fecundity of our place. We then accept our portion both of work and of the fruits of nature's bounty without striving to alter or engross more than our share. We then appreciate not just our own good fortune, but the blessings given to all nature's creatures. Presenting this vision of a life in place within nature as the fruit of a certain kind of "settlement" and "economy" is one main purpose of *Walden.*

Between Thoreau's view of an intrinsically valuable landscape to be used lovingly and sparingly and a Lockean view of land ownership, with rights but no responsibilities toward the land, there is an unbridgeable gulf. Those holding the former attitude will have little interest in the "improved agriculture" that Thoreau mocks several times in "The Bean-Field" (158, 162); this attitude also leads naturally to proposals to protect some of the landscape from direct economic uses. Locke's more aggressive, entrepreneurial attitude finds its natural limit in a view of land solely as economic resource in which we may modify the landscape any way we see fit so as to maximize yields and profits. This purely economic view has been written across hundreds of millions of monocultural acres of America, from the sugarcane fields of Florida and the corn fields of Illinois to the wheat fields of Kansas and the rice fields of California.

Walden's only sustained invective is Thoreau's remarkably harsh criticism of such greedy, life-denying land ownership. It comes near the end of the chapter "The Ponds," after Thoreau has described Walden and its surrounding ponds in loving detail:

> *Flint's Pond!* Such is the poverty of our nomenclature. What right had the unclean and stupid farmer, whose farm abutted on this sky water, whose shores he has ruthlessly laid bare, to give his name to it? Some skin-flint, who loved better the reflecting surface of a dollar . . . . who never *saw* it, who never bathed in it, who never loved it, who never protected it, who never spoke a good word for it, nor thanked God that he had made it . . . . who could show no title to it but the deed which a like-minded neighbor or legislature gave him,—him who thought only of its money value; whose presence perchance cursed all the shore . . . . I respect not his labors, his farm where every thing has its price; who would carry the landscape, who would carry his God, to market, if he could get any thing for him; who goes to market *for* his god as it is; on whose farm nothing grows free, whose fields bear no crops, whose meadows no flowers, whose trees no fruits, but dollars; who loves not the beauty of his fruits, whose fruits are not ripe for him till they are turned to dollars. (195-96)

Mr. Flint was not merely a character in *Walden* but a real person, one of Thoreau's neighbors (Harding 123-24). The damage he did to the forests by his pond was real too. In an enterprising America, Walden and the adjacent ponds and woods are threatened by just such destructive ownership, by the failure of Locke's descendants to *see* and appreciate nature while they show a keen awareness of the land's utilitarian and monetary values.

Such examples lead to Thoreau's oracular commandment, "Enjoy the land, but own it not," which he kept throughout his life (208). But ownership itself is not necessarily the problem. After all, Thoreau squatted on Emerson's acreage at Walden Pond, part of which was bought to protect its forests from the ax. Thoreau also tells us that he considered buying the Hollowell Place, an old, rundown farmstead along the Concord River, in order to forestall any "improvements" to it (82-83). Clearly, ownership can be a means to protect the land. The key is the owner's attitude and his willingness to put nature's beauty and value above monetary gain. Such ownership is better for the land and better for us, Thoreau insists (more than one New England woodlot has been spared the ax or the chainsaw by its owner's fortuitous reading of *Walden*).

As Thoreau sets the scene, neither Walden Pond nor the surrounding woods have yet been irremediably harmed by his own or his neighbors' economic uses. Thoreau's little bean-field itself represents a small, almost insignificant part of the more or less wild landscape adjacent to the pond. His local wood gathering and berrying are even less of a transformative threat than his bean-field.[5] This is as it should be, Thoreau believes, for our human economy is but a part of the larger economy of nature. Thoreau shows his respect for this relative balance by setting up a small, benign personal economy in the shadow of life's greater one and by spending as much time studying the latter as sustaining the former. Thoreau's vision is one in which the human economy fits itself to nature's economy rather than *vice versa*. Both a speculative attitude toward land and wastefulness are equally wrong in such a view. Thoreau castigates the farmer who shears off his woodlot purely for profit; *he* prefers gathering downed wood or grubbing up stumps to cutting live trees for firewood. Our necessary use of the land should not harm our home.

Because we do belong. In *Walden*, Thoreau emphasizes that he is a native, first by birth, then by conscious choice and genuine effort:

> When I was four years old, as I well remember, I was brought from Boston to this my native town, through these very woods and this field, to the pond. It is one of the oldest scenes stamped on my memory. And now tonight my flute has waked the echoes over that very water. The pines still stand here older than I; or, if some have fallen, I have cooked my supper with their stumps, and a new growth is rising all around, preparing another aspect for new infant eyes. Almost the same johnswort springs from the same perennial root. (155-56)

Thoreau does not say: I am a native, therefore I have a right to do whatever I choose here at the pond. He does not say: human beings are natural, so any way we treat the rest of nature is acceptable. Rather, he has grasped a valuable, living, more-than-human order, linking individual organisms and stretching across the generations. He will strive to remember this in his economic activities and to fit into the landscape rather than changing it to suit himself. That will mean more work for less yield through not importing fertilizers or hired hands. It will mean resigning a certain number of his beans to the woodchucks. It will mean striving to keep Walden Pond beautiful so that future generations ("new infant eyes") can also enjoy the pond. It will mean taking only what he needs. If he does this, and only if he does this, he may hope that while trees may be cut, new forests will grow up to take their places. He may hope that none of the "original settlers" will be permanently displaced, that "almost the same johnswort" will continue to "spring from the same perennial root."

"The Bean-Field" represents something extraordinary in the history of philosophy. While there had been many earlier discussions of vegetarianism and animal welfare in the western ethical tradition, I know of no earlier attempt to set appropriate limits to the human appropriation of wild nature. Nor do I think the deepest of deep ecologists have bettered Thoreau's account of how to act on the recognition of intrinsic value in the non-human world:

> * Satisfy necessities, avoid luxuries and provide for a modest comfort in life.
>
> * Find happiness in knowing, experiencing and being-with nature rather than in consuming, owning or transforming it.
>
> * Tell nature's stories to celebrate them and to convince others to allow them to continue.

Here is a true environmental ethics which forthrightly asserts values and rights within the non-human world. This goes beyond a concern for individual non-human animals—radical enough, for Thoreau's time—to a concern for endangered species (the shad), for how much of nature's productivity humans have a right to engross (the forests around Walden), and for preserving the wildness of the overall landscape. Even now, sympathetic philosophers are struggling to articulate these concerns within the confines of traditional philosophical perspectives and most philosophers ignore them altogether.

Nature's Human Value and the Naturalist's Virtues

As I have already shown, Thoreau is a virtue ethicist: particularly in *Walden* he focuses less on our duties toward others and more on questions of excellence

and flourishing. In discoursing on the nature of the good life he often includes an environmental component. Freedom for Thoreau includes not just the absence of physical coercion, but also having the time to explore his surroundings and the privilege to saunter through the local landscape without being arrested for trespassing. He finds great physical pleasure and sensual stimulation in living and working in the woods, comparing his life favorably to the indoor lives of so many of his contemporaries, poor factory girls driven by necessity but also wealthy Concord burghers who are free to live otherwise. He reports that dwelling apart from people awakened him to possibilities for friendship and connection to the rest of nature. Thoreau makes it clear that he is not setting up rules that all must follow. But his experiment by the pond suggests possibilities for living well in nature and what we may give up by living a more urbanized existence.

So we can say that *Walden* propounds an *environmental* virtue ethics, which specifies human flourishing and excellence in relation to nature (see Cafaro, "Thoreau, Leopold, and Carson," and van Wensveen for recent philosophical discussions of environmental virtue ethics). Some of this is quite basic. The simplest messages in *Walden* are to get outside, use our limbs and delight in our senses. Run, walk, swim, sweat. Taste the sweetness of the year's first huckleberries and feel the juice dribble down your chin. It feels good to plunge into a pond first thing in the morning and WAKE UP, or to float lazily in a boat along its surface, wafted we know not where by the breeze, looking up at the clouds. It feels good to trundle through the snow on a cold winter night and to warm up by a fire. *Walden* celebrates these simple, sensual experiences in nature (in addition to mining them for literary symbols or knowledge of deeper realities). Now, "get out of the house" and "eat huckleberries" are not very profound messages. But then, who says ethics should be profound? What we need to know in order to live well may indeed by very simple. Certainly what we need to *do* in order to improve our lives often is.

When we take *Walden* as a whole, a much fuller picture of Thoreau's view of the good life emerges which includes health, freedom, pleasure, friendship, a rich experience, knowledge, reverence, self-culture and personal achievement (Cafaro, "Thoreau's Virtue Ethics," 19). For Thoreau, each of these key components of a good human life depends on a healthy, accessible and partially wild environment.

For example, Thoreau takes great pains to show how attentiveness and connection to nature enrich his experience at the pond. This takes effort, of course. In *Walden* he praises and exhibits the proper virtues of the naturalist: patience, stillness, alertness, physical endurance, keen hearing, keen eyesight, careful observation, precise description, careful measurement, the ability to make fine distinctions. The book includes many examples of attentive description: surveying the pond, describing the varied colors of its water, chronicling the battle of the ants or the returning birds of Spring. Jane Bennett describes "microvisioning," a keen concentration and focus on nature, as one of Thoreau's "techniques of self-

fashioning." "To practice microvision upon nature is to transform it into Nature," she writes, "beautiful, sublime, and Wild" (27). Bennett emphasizes how important such attentiveness to nature is to Thoreau's pursuit of personal excellence.

Clearly, Thoreau believes that as we cultivate the naturalist's virtues, we deepen and enrich our experience. Greater attentiveness turns a dull, undifferentiated forest into a world of many-storied beauty. Greater knowledge remakes a monotonous grassland into a shifting mosaic with hundreds of plant and dozens of bird species lending interest and life to the landscape. Additionally, one part of a rich experience is diversity of experience, and we should explore wild nature because it provides such different sights and stories from the town. At this late date we are over-civilized, Thoreau believes, turned almost exclusively toward town and away from the woods. But a wise man or woman knows and experiences both and finds diversion in the one after having a surfeit of the other.

The pursuit of knowledge is also a key component of the good life for Thoreau, and *Walden* affirms that self-knowledge, spiritual knowledge, and ethical knowledge all are intimately connected to knowledge of nature. So is historical knowledge. Since raw nature is the matrix from within which civilization has emerged, we improve our understanding of *human* history when we try to imagine or recreate how Native Americans or early white settlers experienced nature. Thoreau spent many hours poring over accounts of early New England; in *Walden*, he weaves his story at the pond in with these earlier stories. He seems to feel a moral imperative to relate his own life to those who have come before him. The land is the common bond between them. For Thoreau, it is important to be able to pick out the sites of Indian settlements along the river, spot the trail earlier inhabitants have worn around Walden Pond, or harvest the berries and fish that previous generations relied upon.

Finally, Thoreau claims that a close experience of nature leads to clearer thinking. "It would seem as if the very language of our parlors would lose all its nerve and degenerate into *parlaver* wholly," he writes, "our lives pass at such remoteness from its symbols, and its metaphors and tropes are necessarily so far fetched" (244-45). To bring words back into close contact with nature and our actual, physical experience is to reawaken them and ourselves too to some extent. Thoreau uses this less as a springboard to get at the *true* meaning of words than to get at new meanings and old, lost meanings and to throw established meanings into question. Think of the importance of "settlement," "cultivation," or even "higher" and "lower" to his ethics. Bringing these ethical metaphors back to earth allows us to feel them more deeply and may open up new meaning in our lives. But it also shows us, as Stanley Cavell puts it, that we are "chanced, but not forced, by language" (67). Somewhat paradoxically, "grounding" our ethical language in natural experience both strengthens its foundation and opens up new possibilities in our lives.

Consider in this regard "cultivation," important as self-cultivation or *Bildung* for Thoreau. To speak of the cultivation of knowledge, virtue and other

higher human achievements and qualities alongside the cultivation of potatoes and beans in "The Bean-Field" suggests much. It implies that self-cultivation too may be more a matter of hard, sustained effort than flash and momentary successes and that self-cultivation too may degenerate into drudgery. It hints that we may not always recognize our "proper field" of labor and that gratitude for our opportunities is an appropriate complement to all self-cultivation.

Now, the juxtaposition of beans and *Bildung* does not *prove* any of these things, but it does suggest them. Many contemporary philosophers believe the best way to clarify our ethical thought is to drop all allusiveness and stick to dull, nonmetaphorical language as much as possible. But such philosophers rarely "inspire" their students as Thoreau has inspired so many over the years. Nor, in my opinion, have they succeeded in clarifying the meaning of our ethical terms, the great desideratum of analytic philosophical ethics. Thoreau has more to tell us about ethical meaning, because his method "fleshes out" the full meaning of our ethical terms and ties them to particular activities and experiences in our lives.

What holds true for ethical terms holds for physical, religious and other kinds of terms, as well. Our language is "littered" with dead metaphors. We use dozens of them every day without considering their aptness or what, if they were apt, they would actually convey. Clear thinking involves clarifying these dead, hazy areas of our language. It also involves the perspicuous use and appreciation of symbols, which is also furthered by awareness of our surroundings. Consider, for example, the almost infinite suggestiveness and power of "morning" and "awakening" as symbols for moral renewal (*Walden,* 88-90).

If we attend to our surroundings and the natural world, dead metaphors will spring to life; we will discover new symbols; we will be better able to judge the aptness of symbols and metaphors in different situations. In these ways, we will be able to think better. But this means that the more we experience and the more fully we experience it, the better we will be able to think. When Thoreau writes that "little is to be expected of that day, if it can be called a day, to which we are not awakened by our Genius, but by the mechanical nudgings of some servitor," the admonition speaks directly to anyone who has ever unwillingly dragged him or herself out of bed to the shrilling of an alarm clock (89). But to appreciate fully "awakening" as a metaphor for moral and personal renewal, you need to have watched a sunrise recently and felt the radiance on your face and the sense of promise in your bones. We experience this more directly and powerfully out in wild nature, far from the sounds of the neighbors.

This is not to say that our only important uses of nature are symbolic or metaphorical. In "Brute Neighbors," Thoreau asks: "Why has man just these species of animals for his neighbors; as if nothing but a mouse could have filled this crevice?" (225). His immediate answer—"I suspect Pilpay & Co. [Indian storytellers] have put animals to their best use, for they are all beasts of burden, in a sense, made to carry some portion of our thoughts"—suggests the importance of literary and symbolic uses of nature. But *Walden* and his career as a whole suggest two other important answers to the question "why has man just these neighbors?"

One is a scientific answer: we have these neighbors so we can study and understand them. We may learn how they behave and why they behave as they do; how they interact with one another; why some species are here rather than others; how their lives are keyed in to nature's larger cycles. The way Thoreau puts the question here—why these particular species? why this species in this particular niche or "crevice"?—suggests his ecological emphasis. As recent scholars have shown, Thoreau's career moved in a more scientific direction during the 1850s, with a particular concern for phenology, forest succession, and other ecological topics (see Walls). His path shows that attentiveness to nature can turn one into a naturalist and finally into a scientist. It also shows that nature is an endless source of fascinating questions to those who explore her.

A second important answer to the question "why these neighbors?" is so that we may treat them as neighbors. Like our human neighbors, they challenge our generosity and hold out the hope of fulfilling relationships. Some come nearer to Thoreau over time, like the mouse living under the floorboards who eventually ate out of his hand. Others keep their distance, like the loon on the pond. Both kinds of connection are good. It is vulgar to insist on proximity when one's neighbor resists it or to equate physical proximity with the goodness of a relationship. Thoreau extends this neighborliness beyond animals to plants—"Instead of calling on some scholar, I paid many a visit to particular trees" (201)—and finally to the woods and the pond itself. One need not anthropomorphize one's neighbors to do this; simply appreciate them for what they are and treat them with respect and restraint. Just as we show our broadmindedness when we befriend people of different classes or races, so too when we recognize "brute neighbors." In both cases, we improve our own lives in doing so.

The Ponds

These themes of love of nature, pursuit of knowledge, personal expression and enriched experience all come together in *Walden's* central chapter: "The Ponds." The plural title undoubtedly refers to Walden's neighbors—Flint's, Goose and White Ponds—which it also describes. But the title also refers to the many Waldens that Thoreau experiences and describes for us here. We are given the real pond with a certain depth and location, certain species of fish inhabiting it, particular bird species returning at particular times of the year. And we are given various imaginary ponds in the legends of Indians, settlers, Thoreau's contemporaries, and Thoreau himself. We are given the parts of the pond and the individuals who make it up, from frogs and loons to fishermen and ice-cutters. But also the pond as a harmonious whole, each ripple on its surface eventually smoothed out, no matter which unfortunate individual's end it speaks of. We are given the pond in time: a detailed account covering Thoreau's life and the remembrances of older Concordians; an ever more sketchy and hypothetical account extending back through white settlement into Indian times and beyond, into frank speculation and mythology.

And we are given a timeless Walden, symbol of nature's beauty, purity and inexhaustible fecundity. "The Pond in Winter" (perhaps not accidentally *Walden's* most abstract, analytical chapter), in "Spring" and indeed in all seasons. The pond as phenomena (recall the brilliant description of the varied colors of its water) and as thing-in-itself (or as near to this as Thoreau can get: *how* near is yet another philosophical puzzle the pond puts to him). The pond as described by the poet, the aesthete, and the scientist; the fisherman, the hunter, and the ice-skater; the visitor and the resident; the ascetic, the sensualist and the home economist.

It is because the pond can be all these things to Thoreau that it is so important to him. At the same time, if it were simply the scene of his own artistry and had no independent existence, it would be much less important to him than it was. It is his recognition of this independent existence and his sustained efforts to know and appreciate it that set Thoreau apart from the next half-century's flowery "nature fakers" on the one hand and our own anemic post-modern literati on the other. His commitment to pursuing Truth about Reality grounds a genuine love of nature.

Thoreau's journal recounts again and again his desire for a personal, fulfilling relationship with nature (see, for example, the entries for 6 May 1851, 12-16 July 1852, and 8 November 1858). *Walden* documents his success in attaining it. "I experienced sometimes," he writes, "that the most sweet and tender, the most innocent and encouraging society may be found in any natural object" (131). Such personal, friendly, gentle acquaintance sustains him through his solitary days at the pond. "The poet," he had written years earlier, "is that one especially who speaks civilly to Nature as a second person" (*Journal* 1, 338, 30 November 1841).

At Walden, this personal affection and acquaintance broadens to include the river, the forests and fields, and the landscape generally. "The Ponds" gives Thoreau's respectful, loving, imaginative yet accurate description of Walden Pond, the second most fully developed character in *Walden*. Despite the many views taken and the variety of inhabitants described, Walden is portrayed as a coherent, harmonious whole, and repeatedly personified. The central moment in the chapter is Thoreau's thrilled assertion of this personality, its goodness, his personal relationship to it, and finally his merging with it:

> Of all the characters I have known, perhaps Walden wears best, and best preserves its purity . . . . It is perennially young, and I may stand and see a swallow dip apparently to pick an insect from its surface as of yore. It struck me again to-night, as if I had not seen it almost daily for more than twenty years,—Why, here is Walden, the same woodland lake that I discovered so many years ago; where a forest was cut down last winter another is springing up by its shore as lustily as ever; the same thought is

> welling up to its surface that was then; it is the same liquid joy and happiness to itself and its Maker, ay, and it may be to me. It is the work of a brave man surely, in whom there was no guile! He rounded this water with his hand, deepened and clarified it in his thought, and in his will bequeathed it to Concord. I see by its face that it is visited by the same reflection; and I can almost say, Walden, is it you? (192-93)

He may *almost* use the second person singular to address Walden. Why "almost"? First, because as a naturalist he must love accurately, and a pond is not a unity or a person in the same sense as a human being or a woodchuck. Thoreau, observing the complex interconnections between its individual inhabitants and the creative force "welling up" within it creating these individuals, sees an ecological unity. His personification does justice to this insight and to the beauty he sees and the affection he feels. Yet insofar as the pond as an entity is less unified or integrated than an individual organism or less singularly directed in its purposes than a conscious actor, its personification is misleading. If Thoreau wants to love *it* then he must take this into account. Overly insistent personification manifests either ignorance or a failure to appreciate the pond for what it really is.

Second, because as a true lover Thoreau recognizes the power and the elusiveness of the lovingly spoken "you." We may describe a pond or a person in any degree of detail we choose, but the loving "you" moves beyond such descriptions. It is a personal *act*. Speaking this loving "you" is never merely an accurate description of our feelings for the beloved, or this combined with an accurate description of her various qualities. Rather it involves an affirmation of her value and a taking on of responsibility for her. It is not something to be said lightly. The beauty of the beloved may call forth an effortless affirmation of our love. But to love well takes effort. Perhaps, then, Thoreau also means to say that he will not rest in a facile adoration of the pond and its myriad productions but will continue to work to know them and publish their glories.

Third, Thoreau hesitates to say "you," because when we love truly, we love the beloved herself and not our own vision of her. The passage is followed and completed by this short poem:

> It is no dream of mine,
> To ornament a line;
> I cannot come nearer to God and Heaven
> Than I live to Walden even.
> I am its stony shore,
> And the breeze that passes o'er;
> In the hollow of my hand
> Are its water and its sand,
> And its deepest resort
> Lies high in my thought.

For all their lyricism, this poem and the preceding passage suggest skepticism concerning the extent to which we can truly know the beloved. The surface of the pond is "visited by the same reflection" as the writer; is this Thoreau's own face reflected in the water? He might wonder to what extent his "reflections" on the nature of the pond are in fact projections of his own interests and desires onto it. Thoreau has visited Walden nearly every day since he was a child, but the many stories of his own he now associates with it may prevent him from seeing *it* and appreciating *its* stories. Hesitation here marks an acceptance that our knowledge of the beloved is never complete or perfect, hence never does her full justice, hence can never take her place. Unless of course we are in love with love, like Agathon in Plato's *Symposium* (194E-201C), and more concerned to cultivate our own romantic feelings than to know and do right by our beloved.

These are the ineliminable dangers of love. They all come down, in one way or another, to putting ourselves above the beloved. The great danger for the lover of *nature* is that he will put his own systems and creations above her. The greater his success—in understanding nature or creating new symbolic worlds which move beyond her—the greater the temptation to do so. In the prose passage above, the imagined "Maker" of the pond, who may be God or a logos within nature, is mirrored in the companion poem by Thoreau himself, the author of *Walden*. Both authors "deepen and clarify" the pond "in thought" and "bequeath it to Concord," making it available to Thoreau's neighbors and readers. This juxtaposition proclaims Thoreau's god-like accomplishment. Recall *Walden's* preface, where Thoreau states his intention to "brag lustily" of his accomplishments. Knowledge of nature and nature's representation in a work such as *Walden* are divine—true second creations.

Three facts take the sting out of this presumptuous bragging and the anthropocentrism to which it might lead. First, Thoreau backs it up. He really does know Walden Pond and does create a great literary work. Second, as he says elsewhere, he is not bragging for himself but for humanity and in order to wake his neighbors up. These are possibilities for all of us, which we should actualize and celebrate. Third, and by far the most important, Thoreau believes that the representation of nature may be great *because nature herself is great.* The key words in the poem are:

> It is no dream of mine
> To ornament a line.

Walden Pond is not the creation of his own fancy, but a glorious reality. This is the source of his own greatness, Thoreau says, even as he insists on that greatness.

Thoreau places these two lines at the heart of the heart of *Walden*, because we are perpetually forgetting them and taking our own physical artifacts and mental constructions for the whole of reality. In a similar way, the plural title "The Ponds"

reminds us that we necessarily have two ponds: the pond in the Earth and the pond in the book. Each of these fragment in their turn. The complex ecological system of the pond is imperfectly integrated; has uncertain, shifting, and overlapping boundaries; is the loci for many individual "personalities." The writer, strictly speaking, can never tell us *the* story of the pond, but only stories. New experiences and new experiencers create further stories, adding to the storied character of nature. The trick is to embrace this pluralism while remaining committed to the pursuit of truth and goodness.

Thoreau's position here is based on two axioms. First, that he does know Walden Pond, although that knowledge is incomplete. Second, that its stories are good ones which should be told and allowed to continue. Thoreau hesitates before saying "you" to Walden. But he does say it. He thus enriches his own life and (he may hope) helps preserve Walden's.

In getting to know Walden, Thoreau has delved deeper into himself and swum further out into the great stream of life; articulated inchoate ideals and found his own voice; and learned something of natural and human history and of his own place within them. Thoreau's whole life—from his never-to-be-forgotten childhood exaltations to his mature artistic, scientific and philosophical achievements—is thus intimately tied to Walden Pond and its environs. His goodness, such as it is, must be a function of *its* goodness. He went to the pond to pursue self-development and artistic achievement, but when he came to write a book about his experience he titled it *Walden*, not *I, Henry* or *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Naturalist.* In an environmental virtue ethics, human excellence and nature's excellence are necessarily entwined.[6]

Challenges

Walden provides an inspiring account of one person living well in nature. It argues that we will be better, happier people if we take the time to know and enjoy nature. The many activities through which we do this will give our lives diversity and interest; performing them will help us develop virtues we might not otherwise develop. In these ways *Walden* suggests the rudiments of an environmental virtue ethics which is noble and challenging and which makes room for the rest of creation.

There are two main challenges to such an environmental virtue ethics. First, there are those popular ideals which define happiness in terms of increased wealth and economic consumption. Modern life (and especially modern advertising) provide a variety of such ideals, from the crude to the refined. Here a Thoreauvian response is clear: a satisfactory conception of human well-being extends beyond economic consumption and gross physical pleasure to encompass nobler human activities. If we value such higher activities, we must limit those economic activities which undermine them, whether they do so by taking over our lives or by harming that environment which makes human endeavor possible.

In "Economy," Thoreau likens the provision of economic necessities to stoking a furnace and asks his readers:

> When a man is warmed by the several modes which I have described, what does he want next? Surely not more warmth of the same kind, as more and richer food, larger and more splendid houses, finer and more abundant clothing, more numerous incessant and hotter fires, and the like. When he has obtained those things which are necessary to life, there is another alternative than to obtain the superfluities; and that is, to adventure on life now, his vacation from humbler toil having commenced. The soil, it appears, is suited to the seed, for it has sent its radicle downward, and it may now send its shoot upward also with confidence. Why has man rooted himself thus firmly in the earth, but that he may rise in the same proportion into the heavens above? (15)

This may sound grandiose, but the question is: do you believe it? If not: what do you believe instead? All our other ethical judgments depend upon our answers here, all our calculations of profit and loss and of lives well-spent or ill-spent.

We need not follow Thoreau so far as to see merely an instrumental value in "stoking the furnace." We may believe that pleasure is a necessary part of a good human life and still agree that achievements such as raising healthy children, learning about nature, or building careers which support us and are genuinely useful to society, are also important. These are the things for which we strive and on which serious people judge the success of their lives. Our economic lives and our environmental policies should support these goals. This is not necessarily to put on a hair shirt. To the extent that wealth, possessions or economic consumption further our true goals and accord with justice, they should be pursued. But no further. For "there is no more fatal blunderer than he who consumes the greater part of his life getting his living" (*Reform Papers*, 160).

Thoreau's criticisms of gluttony and acquisitiveness are very much in the ancient virtue ethics tradition. As he puts it: "the ancient philosophers, Chinese, Hindoo, Persian, and Greek, were a class than which none has been poorer in outward riches, none so rich in inward" (*Walden*, 14). But these criticisms are also strikingly applicable to modern environmental issues. High levels of consumption deplete resources and generate excessive pollution, harming both wild nature and human beings. Americans' current love affair with gas-hogging SUV's and failure to build mass transit translate directly into more asthma attacks and cases of lung cancer and more wild lands sacrificed for oil and coal extraction. Here as elsewhere, "our vast abdomens betray us."

In Thoreau's view, an excessively economic orientation also warps our understanding of the world, literally cutting us off from reality. Farmer Flint cannot

see his namesake pond and the many plants and animals inhabiting it—both because he isn't interested and because the pond and its inhabitants are so vividly apparent to him as resources to be used or sold. A wild goose may be a tasty meal in the oven but not an animal with its own interesting habits or history, or a link with distant lands, or a symbol of spring. A wet meadow may be appreciated as the scene of two rich hay crops per year, but not as the site of dozens of plant species different from the adjacent uplands or of interesting patterns of ecological succession. Flint does not know these stories and thus he cannot "interweave the thread of the pond's history with his own" (196). The idea wouldn't even occur to him. Rather he changes, or would change, the pond in any way that might prove profitable, wrenching its story abruptly out of past natural and cultural history, ending the stories of "old settlers" who do not fit his selfish economic regime.

"The Ponds'" juxtaposition of farmer Flint with naturalist Thoreau suggests a radical choice in how we will relate to nature. By focusing on the gross consumptive uses of nature, we miss out on the higher uses to which it can be put. By focusing on the landscape's monetary value, we miss out on the many other values it may exhibit or provide: aesthetic, spiritual, scientific, historical. Of course, Thoreau does not deny such monetary or consumptive values, any more than he seeks to avoid economic life itself. We need to use nature, and in our time as in Thoreau's we cannot completely avoid a monetary perspective. The point is to put economics in its proper, subordinate place, in our lives and on the landscape. If we do so, our economic activities may even teach us much about nature, as hoeing beans and building his cabin taught Thoreau.

Thoreau revisits these themes in his late piece "Huckleberries," where the marketing of berries is contrasted with an appreciation of their beauty, knowledge of their natural and cultural history, generosity in dividing them up, and gratitude for their abundance. "Huckleberries" works to specify the correct mix between scientific and experiential knowledge, and between knowledge of nature and its appreciation and celebration. It tries to show exactly how the bloom is rubbed off wild nature as "the cart goes to market" and to stick up for those experiences and attitudes toward nature which a market-oriented society is in danger of forgetting. While Thoreau in "Huckleberries" is as leery as in *Walden* of money-love, he seems to take a more positive view of appetite and at least some kinds of consumption, especially compared to the discussion in "Higher Laws." Approached rightly, consumption may be an important avenue for knowledge and pleasant experience. Like *Walden*, "Huckleberries" tries to specify a good economics—healthy and uplifting for us, relatively benign in its effects on nature. Such proper economy must be a part of any convincing environmental virtue ethics.

We might call the second main challenge to an environmental virtue ethics the "artificial alternatives" challenge. A skeptic might argue that most if not all of what Thoreau finds in wild nature may also be found in the developed human environment, thus that we need not preserve or explore wild nature. For example,

a modern suburbanite can get his exercise by swimming at a health club or jogging around his neighborhood. He can improve his observational and descriptive abilities by painting still-lives or studying architecture. Finally, the critic might say, human beings are themselves interesting and diverse, and we should learn and celebrate this diversity. Not only can we develop "the naturalist's" virtues without wild nature, but Thoreau and his modern followers may cut themselves off from essential human contact, fail to cultivate the social virtues, and foreclose important avenues for knowledge and happiness.

In answering this challenge, we must first admit that cultivating good personal relationships and appreciating human creativity are indeed essential to our happiness and that any ways we get exercise, uncover diversity, or hone our powers of observation, description and analysis are better than nothing. Still, failing to know and experience wild nature is a genuine loss, just as a complete insensibility to the history and diversity of human cultures and humanized places would be. The wild is essentially different from the tame. A person who does not experience and understand something of wild nature misses out on much of what this world has to offer, just as a person who never travels or only has friends of one sex misses out. But perhaps the wilderness ignoramus loses more than these others, because wild nature is so different from human culture and because it is the crucible from which culture has emerged. To know nothing of wild nature is thus necessarily to fail to properly contextualize our own lives.

Hasty readers sometimes assert that *Walden* advocates a complete withdrawal from human society or the absolute superiority of nature over culture. But Thoreau's acts of settlement, the volumes of Homer, Plato and Darwin by his bedside, and his return to the village at the end of his stay at the pond all point to a different conclusion. Thoreau hopes that nature and culture may complement one another. He believes that the richest human life extracts from each sphere the best of what it offers.

"In one direction from my house there was a colony of muskrats in the river meadows; under the grove of elms and buttonwoods in the other horizon was a village of busy men," he says (167). Both are interesting and have much to teach us; both deserve to be allowed to flourish in their own ways. Thoreau's house is in between, emphasizing a necessary distance from both. If he sometimes experiences a mystic merging with nature or "resolves himself into the essence of things" (224), he also speaks of the conscious subject's "coming and going" with "a strange liberty in nature," a part of and yet apart from it (129). Knowledge—whether scientific or experiential—depends upon this distance. So does creativity—be it the creation of a book or a farmstead. Something similar applies in our relations with other people. To genuinely converse implies a certain distance; to have thoughts worth sharing with others implies hard work in solitude (140-41).

What does wild nature specifically have to offer that the human world does not? A larger context in which to put our own lives, or to call them into question. New forms of beauty, mostly unseen and unappreciated by human beings.

New stories and new kinds of stories, in which consciousness and individual control play a smaller part. Salutary reminders of our own unimportance (you will not break through the ice or get drenched by an unexpected thunderstorm at the mall). The revitalization of dead words, symbols and doctrines. A sense of hope when our fellow human beings disappoint us. In *Walden* and in his latter writings, Thoreau returns to these points repeatedly. Just as "Huckleberries" revisits important economic issues, the late essay "Walking" reiterates *Walden*'s claims about the importance of engaging with wild nature. Economy and the Wild are such central concepts for Thoreau that his whole ethical philosophy can be presented through the lens of either.

In the end those who seek to protect wild nature do so as much for their own sakes as for Nature's:

> Our village life would stagnate if it were not for the unexplored forests and meadows which surround it. We need the tonic of wildness,—to wade sometimes in marshes where the bitterns and the meadow-hen lurk . . . and the mink crawls with its belly close to the ground. At the same time that we are earnest to explore and learn all things, we require that all things be mysterious and unexplorable, that land and sea be infinitely wild, unsurveyed and unfathomed by us because unfathomable . . . We need to witness our own limits transgressed, and some life pasturing freely where we never wander. (317-18)

This passage captures the deep paradoxes involved in our attempts to know and experience the wild (can we "witness . . . where we never wander"? study nature without changing it? move beyond our own concepts and categories to understand things-in-themselves?). But it also asserts the crucial possibilities that we *can* draw back and limit our effects on the natural world and that we can know *its* stories, rather than just projecting our own stories onto it.

Some critics of *Walden*—and of modern wilderness preservation efforts—assert that such judgments depend on specifying a single, sharp distinction between wild and civilized landscapes. *Walden* instead develops a nuanced understanding of this ambiguous yet necessary distinction, as in Thoreau's description of his "half-civilized" bean field (158) or in the repeated juxtaposition of the wild and the tame in the chapter "Sounds." Similarly, critics often present a stark dichotomy: either we preserve the whole landscape completely with no human modification or we use it in any way we see fit (the "do you want us all to live in caves?" argument). Thoreau instead suggests a flexible and contextual way of relating to a diversity of landscapes. He does argue for fully preserving parts of the remote Maine woods as unmanaged wilderness (see next section). But he also advocates protecting semi-wild areas closer to home, and an important part of his experiment at the pond involves using the land while minimizing his displacement of wild nature. In

short, Thoreau's personal ethics, translated into a political agenda, implies both preservation of wild nature and (genuinely) wise use of natural resources. It is eminently practical.

The proper mix of wildness and culture in an individual or on a landscape are complex questions. One reason to keep some forests uncut and rivers running free is to make sure that the questions themselves do not disappear, as they have for many human beings and many regions of the Earth. We may be comfortable in our villages, but there may be an excess of comfort. We need the physical and intellectual challenges that wild nature sets us. Nature may speak to us *piano* in individual flowers or birds, non-human beings who challenge us to know and appreciate them. Or she may thunder *fortissimo* with displays of power and vastness to overwhelm our understanding and destroy our sense of our own importance. Such experiences may lead to love, wonder, horror, awe or reverence—or to the renewed attempt to understand the order which we believe lies behind this complex world. Such challenges to our intelligence, generosity and imagination strengthen them. Wild nature has been the source of great human achievements in science, poetry, religion and philosophy. I share Thoreau's doubts that these highest human activities can thrive in its absence.

Conservation

Walden says little about political issues, arguing correctly that self-improvement cannot wait for the world to improve. Ethics is not politics. However, any ethical philosophy implies a political philosophy and Thoreau's virtue ethics does entail certain positions regarding proper relations with other people and the proper stewardship of nature. Here I restrict myself to considering the latter issue—not because the former is unimportant but because a full consideration of Thoreau's political philosophy lies beyond the scope of this essay.

By Thoreau's time, little had been done in conservation in the United States beyond some ineffective and haphazardly enforced state rules regulating hunting and fishing. National legislation to limit pollution, set aside land for wildlife or to support any other now recognized environmental goals was nonexistent. Rules at any level of government to prevent dumping toxic chemicals in rivers or to protect the lungs and limbs of factory workers were many decades in the future. Thoreau's journal entries and published writings show an interest in many environmental issues, as John Broderick has documented in his article "Thoreau's Proposals for Legislation." For example, a trip along New Hampshire's dusty, unshaded roads led to the suggestion that states landscape their highways and provide roadside parks for the comfort of travellers. Several deaths at railroad crossings prompted him to propose state regulation (Broderick 285-90). An explosion at a nearby powder mill moved him to meditate on ways to make mills safer and references to the stultifying and disease-causing aspects of factories are found both in *Walden* and in the journal.

However, Thoreau's greatest environmental concern was undoubtedly the protection of wild nature. He was an early, passionate voice for the conservation of native species and the preservation of wild landscapes. In "Huckleberries" he writes:

> What are the natural features which make a township handsome — and worth going far to dwell in? A river with its water-falls — meadows, lakes — hills, cliffs or individual rocks, a forest and single ancient trees — such things are beautiful. They have a high use which dollars and cents never represent. If the inhabitants of a town were wise they would seek to preserve these things though at a considerable expense. For such things educate far more than any hired teachers or preachers, or any at present recognized system of school education. (*Natural History Essays*, 253)

As in *Walden*, Thoreau goes on to speak of the role landscape can play in making human history come alive, the fascination and beauty to be found in studying flowers and wild animals, and the simple fun of cross-lot walks and berry-picking parties. "I [can] think of no natural feature which is a greater ornament and treasure to [Concord] than the river," he continues, yet the town foolishly "has done nothing to preserve its natural beauty" or its citizens' access to it. Over the next hundred and fifty years, many cities and towns have realized the wisdom of Thoreau's emphasis on such river conservation and made "greenway" preservation the centerpiece of efforts to maintain livable communities.

Thoreau is clear that preserving the river and other natural features demands a public response. "They who laid out the town should have made the river available as a common possession forever," he writes. In the nature of things, private ownership cannot preserve these public goods, since it limits public access and provides no guarantee that the owner will preserve them. As we saw in *Walden*, Flint's Pond may be destroyed by falling into the hands of Flint. "It is for the very reason that some do not care for these things that we need to combine to protect all from the vandalism of a few." As with the river, so the tops of any commanding hills should be held in common, Thoreau believes; both out of respect for nature and to provide the public continued access to "wider views" of things. "Think of a mountain top in the township—even to the Indians a sacred place—only accessible through private grounds. A temple as it were which you cannot enter without trespassing—nay the temple itself private property and standing in a man's cow yard." Such areas "should be left unappropriated for modesty and reverence's sake" (*Natural History Essays*, 255-56).

While some areas should remain public in perpetuity, Thoreau also advocated regulating private lands to keep them from becoming degraded. Importantly, he would do this not merely for economic ends but also to preserve

beauty, deeming this even more important to human flourishing than preserving secure sources of wood. "It would be worth the while if in each town there were a committee appointed, to see that the beauty of the town receive no detriment," Thoreau writes. "There are a few hopeful signs . . . . The town does set trees along the highways. But does not the broad landscape itself deserve attention?" (256).

While it might be important to preserve remote wilderness and stunning national parks, in "Huckleberries" Thoreau focuses on the need to safeguard wild nature closer to home, in areas accessible to children and busy workers. "I think that each town should have a park, or rather a primitive forest," he writes: "of five hundred or a thousand acres, either in one body or several — where a stick should never be cut for fuel — nor for the navy , nor to make wagons, but stand and decay for higher uses — a common possession forever, for instruction and recreation" (259). Such areas will help preserve the "original settlers" of a township. Perhaps just as important, such reservations could teach a town's inhabitants that not every acre of land should be devoted to economic purposes and that we can "create" beauty and value by leaving things alone—as Thoreau recognized standing in his bean-field.

"All Walden wood might have been reserved," Thoreau continues, "with Walden in the midst of it, and the Easterbrooks country, an uncultivated area of some four square miles in the north of the town, might have been our huckleberry field" for common worship and enjoyment rather than personal, pecuniary gain (259-60). Already in Thoreau's time, Emerson had taken the first steps in this direction, buying land along the pond to protect its trees. The next century and a half witnessed more individual efforts, the creation of Walden Pond State Park and Reservation, and Concord and Lincoln township efforts to set aside extensive adjacent woodlands. In our own time, the Walden Woods Project has stopped incompatible development near the pond and attempts are ongoing to close and rehabilitate the Concord town dump. Those working on these projects are Thoreau's true heirs. We may lament that some of these efforts did not come soon enough to protect the area from inappropriate development, or we can pitch in and help further such preservation efforts at Walden Pond and elsewhere. For as Thoreau says in *Walden*, "to act collectively is according to the spirit of our institutions" (110). It is also the only way to preserve the many public environmental goods on which our happiness depends.

In his excellent summary of the subject, John Broderick states that "almost all" of Thoreau's legislative proposals, with their emphasis on conservation and education, may be described as "welfare proposals" aimed at furthering the culture of his fellow citizens. "Even conservation," Broderick asserts:

> is government activity ultimately in behalf of human welfare, for to Thoreau the final importance of nature is in its effect on man. If we may judge from these references, therefore, Thoreau believed that government did have legitimate functions, and those

> functions were not dissimilar to those implied in Emerson's statement in "Politics": "the highest end of government is the culture of men." (288-89)

This judgment is supported by the justifications Thoreau gives for his legislative suggestions. Since Thoreau was committed to a virtue ethics centered on self-culture, it makes sense that his political proposals should build on these well-developed, deeply felt ethical beliefs.

Broderick's only misstep, I believe, is in making *human* welfare the sole concern behind Thoreau's conservation suggestions. As we saw earlier, Thoreau's environmental ethics is grounded both in our enlightened self-interest and in the intrinsic value of nature. We cannot isolate the former from the latter, since greater attentiveness to nature, pursued in our enlightened self-interest, necessarily leads to a recognition of nature's intrinsic value. Both motivate Thoreau's legislative suggestions, as shown in passages like the following from the journal:

> When the question of the protection of birds comes up, the legislatures regard only a low use and never a high use; the best-disposed legislators employ one, perchance, only to examine their crops and see how many grubs or cherries they contain, and never to study their dispositions, or the beauty of their plumage, or listen and report on the sweetness of their song. The legislature will preserve a bird professedly not because it is a beautiful creature, but because it is a good scavenger or the like. (Journal, XII, 124-5, 8 April 1859).

Note that motivation is important. Legislators should not just protect nature: they should protect nature for the right reasons. Thoreau's main distinction here seems to be between higher and lower uses of nature, and one might argue that this is all that really concerns him. But as the passage continues this possibility is disproved:

> It is as if the question were whether some celebrated singer of the human race—some Jenny Lind or another—did more harm or good, should be destroyed, or not, and therefore a committee should be appointed, not to listen to her singing at all, but to examine the contents of her stomach and see if she devoured anything which was injurious to the farmers and gardeners, or which they cannot spare.

It is not just that the imaginary committee would use mistaken criteria to judge the singer; presumably the very question of whether or not she should be destroyed would be an abomination. It is characteristic of Thoreau to ask us to imagine our hasty judgments about nonhumans as they would apply to people: such comparisons

are a standard part of his attack on anthropocentrism. As with our fellow human beings, we should appreciate other animals' full value to us and put them to "higher uses"—while also valuing them for what they are and not harming them unnecessarily in any case.

Thoreau's conservation proposals are not grounded in a narrow view of human welfare, but on an expansive view of human welfare and on a comprehensive view of the welfare of the larger world around us. This becomes clearer when we consider the full scope of his proposals for protecting nature.

While Thoreau argues for preserving wild nature close to home, he does not make the mistake of assuming that preserving small parks and woodlots will fully preserve wild nature. "No one has yet described for me the difference between that wild forest which occupied our oldest townships, and the tame one which I find there to-day," Thoreau writes in *The Maine Woods*. "It is a difference which would be worth attending to" for what it tells us of natural and cultural history. Primitive "old-growth" forests have a different structure than regenerated second and third-growth stands, he notes. They are darker and damper. They support a somewhat different understory flora. Some animals cannot survive outside large, relatively undisturbed wilderness areas, while long-settled areas tend to lose much of their native fauna. "Those Maine woods differ essentially from ours," Thoreau concludes (151-52). They are nature's creation, not man's, and fully preserve nature's beauty, diversity and wildness.

The Maine woods also give Thoreau a slight case of homesickness and remind him of what he values in Concord's tamer, pastoral landscape. Still, he believes much will be lost if some fully wild areas are not preserved. Just as some species of wild orchids will not survive cultivation and some animals cannot be tamed, so with certain human experiences, artistic moods and achievements: "not only for strength, but for beauty, the poet must, from time to time, travel the logger's path and the Indian's trail, to drink at some new and more bracing fountain of the Muses, far in the recesses of the wilderness" (156). So, we might add, must the natural scientist, the religious seeker or indeed any man or woman who sees art, science or religion as part of their own humanity. For nature's sake and for our own, true wilderness needs to be preserved.

Such reflections lead Thoreau to make one of the earliest calls for national parks, and still one of the most stirring:

> The kings of England formerly had their forests "to hold the king's game," for sport or food, sometimes destroying villages to create or extend them; and I think that they were impelled by a true instinct. Why should not we, who have renounced the king's authority, have our national preserves, where no villages need be destroyed, in which the bear and panther, and some even of the hunter race, may still exist, and not be "civilized off the face of the earth," — our forests, not to hold the king's game

> merely, but to hold and preserve the king himself also, the lord of creation, — not for idle sport or food, but for inspiration and our own true recreation? or shall we, like villains, grub them all up, poaching on our own national domains? (156)

In Maine, Thoreau says, such a preserve would protect the full complement of native species and keep the land wild. For "these are not the artificial forests of an English king—a royal preserve merely. Here prevail no forest laws, but those of nature" (80).

Once again, Thoreau was prescient. In the years following the Civil War, the United States designated Yellowstone and Yosemite as our first two national parks, with many more following in the coming century. In 1964, Congress passed the first Wilderness Act, ensuring that parts of our national parks, national forests and other federal lands remain wild and relatively unmanaged. National parks have proven themselves to be one of America's best and most influential ideas, with the world's nations setting up national parks and wilderness areas on all seven continents. Today, just as the Walden Woods Project works to preserve wild nature close to Thoreau's home, the environmental group RESTORE: The North Woods continues Thoreau's advocacy for New England wilderness. RESTORE proposes the creation of a 3.2 million acre Maine Woods National Preserve, centered on Mount Katahdin and the lakes and rivers Thoreau traversed on his three visits to Maine (you can learn more about their efforts at www.restore.org). Other groups such as the Sierra Club and the Wildlands Project promote similar wilderness preservation and "rewilding" efforts throughout America and the world.

In addition to preserving wild areas, Thoreau also calls for a more enlightened management of rural landscapes used to produce fuel, fodder and agricultural crops. Thoreau's late natural history writings draw out some of the management implications of his ecological studies. Farmers commonly shoot squirrels as vermin, he notes in "The Dispersion of Seeds" manuscript, but his observations show that squirrels are helping to plant future forests. They are valuable both to the calculating owner who is saved the trouble of planting his own oak wood and to those who can appreciate nature's economy in its own right. A wood-lot owner intent on maximizing profit may do best by "a judicious letting Nature alone," allowing the squirrels and winds to replant, rather than acting in ignorance of the likely effects of his actions. A wood-lot owner with an interest in natural history or with transcendentalist leanings may act with even greater restraint, cutting less or not at all, in deference to these ongoing stories (*Faith in a Seed*, 128-30, 170-73).

Thoreau's discussion of proper forest management in these late pieces is surprisingly hard-headed, accepting that some owners' primary interest is profit. He also discusses the active management of forests in positive terms: "Why not control our own woods and destiny more?" he asks, rather than blundering along in ignorance as we have been (*Faith in a Seed,* 166). On the other hand, he is still

convinced that beauty is the most valuable crop that human beings can take from a forest, although it is largely unreaped. He wants to leave some areas wild and unmanaged, for "life consists with wildness . . . Not yet subdued to man, its presence refreshes him" ("Walking," *Natural History Essays*, 114). And he would not countenance a radical simplification of the landscape in order to increase productivity: nature creates diversity and human beings thrive on it (*Faith in a Seed*, 131). Interestingly, Thoreau believes that even utilitarian forestry considerations argue for retaining a certain amount of diversity in the woods. Laura Dassow Walls notes that this position anticipated by nearly 150 years today's "New Forestry," which rejects single-species monocultures in favor of a more diverse and hence resilient forest (275, note 18).

Thoreau's conservation ideal, as we might reconstruct it from these late writings, would perhaps be to work with nature to provide enough of what we need—wood for our fires, money to send the children to college—while insuring that nature's diversity and beauty remain. If we don't cut some wood, we will freeze to death. But if we destroy our woods, then our children's education is useless. "Let me lead you back into your wood-lots again," Thoreau begins the lecture "Succession of Forest Trees" (*Natural History Essays*, 74). He wants his neighbors to walk into the woods with more insight and interest, knowing and appreciating their stories. He wants them to return to their woodlots not merely to better calculate how many cords of wood they may get out of them, but to reap a harvest of knowledge and beauty. In the end, despite his high valuation of human freedom, Thoreau is willing to curtail independence in order to protect forests. His final words on management (and the final sentence of "The Dispersion of Seeds") are "forest wardens should be appointed by the town—overseers of poor husbandmen" (*Faith in a Seed*, 173). This anticipates the many environmental regulations that Americans have enacted over the last century in order to preserve a healthy, partially wild environment for future generations.

Of course, preserving natural areas and regulating land use are only part of a comprehensive environmental politics. This must also include reining in industrial pollution, attending to the "built environment" of cities and towns, limiting population growth and economic consumption and much more besides. Some of this Thoreau anticipated, some he did not. But in general, Thoreau's hostility to overconsumption and to an "economistic" view of the world fits in well with a comprehensive environmentalism. Like most modern environmentalists, Thoreau's vision is one in which the human economy fits itself to nature's economy, rather than *vice versa*. Like most environmentalists, Thoreau believes less consumptive, more intelligent and active lifestyles will be better for us and better for the Earth.

It is interesting to compare Thoreau's views with the conservation philosophy recently outlined in ecologist Daniel Botkin's book *No Man's Garden: Thoreau and a New Vision for Civilization and Nature* (see also Cafaro, "Taming Henry"). Botkin believes that many environmentalists take too negative a view of the human presence in nature. In his book, he asks readers to appreciate semi-wild

areas close to home and to recognize the ways conscientious foresters and ecological restorationists can manage nature to enhance biodiversity. Botkin seeks to place these reflections within an overall environmental philosophy, writing in his preface that his "purpose is to help adjust our approach to living within nature and to integrating civilization and nature, in the hope that both can prosper and persist" (xxi).

Botkin's positive message is plausible and his vehicle for conveying it clever and potentially insightful. For as we have seen, Thoreau too wants to preserve and enjoy what is best in nature and culture. Nevertheless, Botkin's hostility to wild nature is palpable. Unlike Thoreau, who could enjoy and appreciate both wild and pastoral landscapes, Botkin resents the notion of wild areas not put to profitable human use and sees wilderness advocacy as *prima facie* evidence of misanthropy (40, 153). In Botkin's view, human beings should manage the entire landscape so as to further whatever goals we have for it (see for example his discussion of possible conservation goals for Mono Lake, 210-11). Anything less manifests insufficient faith in human civilization. He has great confidence in our ability to manage nature given human "creativity, innovation, and technological development" (31). Of course, we should preserve some places with rich biodiversity for our own enjoyment and study. But keeping nature wild has no value, in itself.

Through selective quotation—mostly on the basis of the famous Ktaadn ascent passage—Botkin tries to prove Thoreau's dislike for wilderness and his preference for a tamer, more managed environment (7, 148). "Thoreau," he writes, "having experienced the vast wilderness in Maine, rejected large areas of wilderness" (155-56). Perhaps sensing that this is implausible given Thoreau's repeated paeans to the wild, Botkin sometimes argues that Thoreau valued *wildness* as a "spiritual state," not *wilderness*, which refers to "a physical state of nature" (121). "Thoreau saw wildness as an internal quality, not an external quantity," he claims (276), and again: "Thoreau meant wildness as a state of mind, not a physical place, so the statement ['in wildness is the preservation of the world'] is erroneously used to justify the conservation or preservation of wilderness" (260).

Whatever the merits of Botkin's conservation philosophy, it seems a long way from Thoreau's own. Consider how often Thoreau suggested the value of letting nature be and of simply attending to her. Consider his frequent laments over the loss of wild nature. Consider how often he spoke skeptically of technology and of our blundering attempts to control nature (for example in "Paradise (To Be) Regained" in *Reform Papers*). Consider how often he advised us to *manage ourselves*, particularly our hoggish consumption of resources (Botkin makes no mention of the dangers of resource overconsumption—an astounding oversight in a book which purports to develop an overall conservation philosophy). Above all, consider Thoreau's pioneering attempt in "Walking" to introduce "the wild" as a central concept in ethics. In that late essay, Thoreau states his faith in wildness as a saving virtue in people *and* nature (*Natural History Essays*, 112-19). To substitute

control and management for wildness is to turn Thoreau's conservation philosophy upside down. To sever the love of "wildness" from a commitment to protect actual wild places *as wild* is to render that philosophy impotent.

Of course, Thoreau does not advocate anarchy, in conservation or in politics generally. I have already noted his practical suggestions for better management of the working landscape and for improvements to the "built" human environment. Nevertheless, he wishes to retain some wildness in the rural landscape and to devote parts of the hinterlands to wilderness, in order to preserve what God or Nature has made there and see what they will create in the future. It is his love for wilderness and his appreciation of the threats facing it which prompt Thoreau in *The Maine Woods* to propose his system of "national preserves." Botkin devotes a dozen pages in his book to ridiculing contemporary efforts to create a Maine Woods National Preserve, siding with the multi-national timber companies and real estate developers who oppose it (161-73). But subtract love and commitment to wilderness, and we are no longer talking about Thoreau's conservation philosophy.

Nor are we talking about a conservation philosophy most of us would accept on its merits. Botkin saddles wilderness advocates with a number of dubious positions. They put people at the bottom of the moral hierarchy, below lobsters and flatworms (39). They have a simplistic "either/or" view of natural areas: either such places are completely wild and pure or they are utterly tamed and degraded (23). Wilderness proponents are against all human modification of the environment: anytime, anywhere (139, 227). After setting up these straw men, Botkin easily poses as the voice of reason. But how reasonable is it, really, for human beings to take total control of the biosphere? Do we not want some areas that are relatively free from human dominance? Isn't wildness itself an integral part of that biodiversity which we are committed to saving?

Botkin mistakes Thoreau's position mainly by narrowing it. He cannot see that Thoreau values both village woodlots and wilderness. He cannot see that Thoreau advocates both wise management and nonmanagement. He cannot see that Thoreau appreciates both nature's value to him and its intrinsic value. Indeed, since this last philosophical mistake undergirds many of the book's erroneous conclusions about Thoreau's conservation views, it is worth a more detailed look.

"Rather than seeing species or ecosystems as important in themselves, Thoreau saw nature as important to human creativity, civilization, and culture," Botkin writes (44). He follows this with the astonishing assertion: "I found little if any discussion in his writings of an intrinsic value of nature independent of the ability of human beings to benefit from it" (54). As we have seen, large parts of two chapters of *Walden* are given over to arguing for such intrinsic value and to exploring the resulting ethical demands on us. Every one of Thoreau's books and most of his natural history essays assert the intrinsic value of nature and the need for human restraint in its use. Botkin seems to believe that we can advocate nature preservation either for anthropocentric or nonanthropocentric reasons, but not both.

This is a clearly a false dichotomy: from Yellowstone and Yosemite onwards, national park supporters have given both sorts of reasons.

It is true that Thoreau also talks about the knowledge, sense of history, spiritual connection and enriched aesthetic experience that contact with wild nature provides to people. But these are additional reasons to preserve wild nature, explore it responsibly and use it sparingly. Thoreau's recognition of these anthropocentric values does not mean that our interests should always trump the interests of other species or that we should manage all parts of the landscape according to our own needs and desires. He explicitly and repeatedly rejects these positions. They are Botkin's positions, not Thoreau's.

Still, Botkin's brand of environmentalism makes sense, if we take out any concern for human overconsumption and any reverence for nature as it is and substitute an infatuation with our own abilities. Then we may come to see ourselves as the lords of all creation, legitimately deciding which species live and which die. Conservation means scientifically considering our "biospheric options," Botkin writes, so as to better choose "what is required for life to persist with the qualities we desire" (193-94). Whether we allow wolves and other top predators to persist in the Maine woods is not an ethical decision—it all depends on human preferences (166). Botkin's book shows how environmental ethics can go astray if we take too high a view of ourselves and ground conservation policies in an *exclusive* concern for human welfare.

Dan Botkin is right: we need an environmental ethics which celebrates human culture and wild nature and makes a legitimate place for both. We need sustainable forestry and healthy cities and ecological restoration of degraded lands. But we also need to rein in the excessive human appropriation of the biosphere and our desire to control the entire landscape. We need to set aside more wilderness. We need an ethics which insists that we consume less, in order to make this possible. The real Henry Thoreau has a lot to say about what such an ethics demands of us and what it offers in return.

Conclusion

Whether we push them in a personal or a political direction, I believe Thoreau's words have much to teach us about environmental ethics. In the end, however, his most important contribution may be his demand that we go out and *live* our ethics. As modern philosophy has gotten more technical and sophisticated, philosophers have lost sight of the ancient connection between philosophy and living a life of wisdom. As Thoreau puts it in *Walden*:

> There are nowadays professors of philosophy, but not philosophers. Yet it is admirable to profess because it was once admirable to live. To be a philosopher is not merely to have subtle thoughts, nor even to found a school, but so to love wisdom as to live according to its

> dictates, a life of simplicity, independence, magnanimity, and trust. It is to solve some of the problems of life, not only theoretically, but practically. (14-15)

We need more environmental philosophers teaching in college classrooms, I believe. But we also need them managing forests and farms, starting co-housing communities, redesigning engines and buildings, teaching children the names of birds and flowers, serving on planning commissions and running for elected office, and simply living better lives in communities across America and throughout the world. In this way, each of us may make his or her own practical contribution to environmental ethics. We should do so, for nature's sake and for our own.

Notes

[1] Similarly, when Thoreau (*A Week*) speaks of the fishes' "happiness" being "a regular fruit of the summer" or of the bream's "humble happiness," he is using this word in an ancient sense (26, 27). For Plato and Aristotle, "eudaimonia," the supreme goal in their ethical systems, meant "flourishing" or "living well." We translate this word with our subjective and trivial "happiness," which implies merely feelings of contentment or pleasure. The recent revival of virtue ethics in philosophy has centered on recapturing the ancient meanings of "virtue" and "happiness" (or rather, of their Greek and Latin cognates and equivalents).

[2] Studying anadromous fish may change our view of knowledge. We may come to believe that human intelligence and knowledge, like the shad's, are more social, environmental or relational than we previously assumed. After all, we know nothing that is not mediated by a language that is not our creation. Science, humanity's greatest generator of knowledge, is clearly an ongoing, social institution and scientific knowledge does not repose in any one individual or group of individuals.

Similarly, Thoreau's suggestion that fish instinct is equivalent to human faith might seem preposterous: mere metaphorical fluff. Yet the comparison may clarify Thoreau's conception of the virtue of faith. Faith plays an important role in *Walden's* ethics of striving, allowing us to formulate ideals which "belie" or transcend experience, helping us better ourselves in the absence of knowledge or certainty (*Walden*, 9, 325). The shad's instinct might play a similar role in its life, helping it do what is best in the absence of the guidance of reason.

[3] Just as the logic of the argument in "Higher Laws" pushes Thoreau further toward asceticism, it pushes him further toward idealism and away from naturalism in his meta-ethics. A philosopher who has partly based his ethics on following nature (46), developing his own true nature (19), and the essential goodness of nature (78-79, 165-66) is forced by these issues to face the fact that

natural does not necessarily equal *good*, with all the complication to his ethical schema this implies.

In *Walden's* first chapter, Thoreau had relied on naturalistic arguments to support his judgments that his neighbor's lives were unhealthy and joyless:

> What I have heard of Brahmins sitting exposed to four fires and looking in the face of the sun; or hanging suspended, with their heads downward, over flames; or looking at the heavens over their shoulders 'until it becomes impossible for them to resume their natural position, while from the twist of the neck nothing but liquids can pass into the stomach;' or dwelling, chained for life at the foot of a tree; or measuring with their bodies, like caterpillars, the breadth of vast empires; or standing on one leg on the tops of pillars,—even these forms of conscious penance are hardly more incredible and astonishing than the scenes which I daily witness. (4)

The passage suggests that his neighbors' work deforms their characters and lives and stunts their natural abilities. This is most clearly implied by the Brahmins' twisted, paralyzed necks, and emphasized by the images of immobility and stasis ("hanging suspended," "chained for life," "standing . . . on the tops of pillars"). We can see how such naturalism may appear to ground ethics. If we share a certain purposive human nature then some actions or life-paths are likely to be bad for each and every one of us. Hence naturalism supports ethical universalism, almost universally seen as a desideratum by philosophers.

In "Higher Laws," however, Thoreau's ascetic denial of appetite leads him in the opposite direction, to decry human nature:

> We are conscious of an animal in us, which awakens in proportion as our higher nature slumbers. It is reptile and sensual, and perhaps cannot be wholly expelled; like the worms which, even in life and health, occupy our bodies . . . . I fear that it may enjoy a certain health of its own; that we may be well, yet not pure. (219)

Having suggested earlier that we should pursue our ideals beyond bodily health, if necessary, Thoreau here reminds us that we may have a certain animal healthiness—and by implication achieve a certain type of happiness focused on physical pleasure—which yet conflicts with our higher ideals and goals. In this latter chapter, he argues for privileging ideals over our animal nature, concluding that "nature is hard to be overcome, but she must be overcome" (221). Considering their source, these words cannot fail to shock, as does the quote from John Donne which follows: "How happy's he who hath due place assigned, To his beasts and disaforested his mind!" (220).

There is a place for such anti-naturalism in virtue ethics. We have all felt the tug between our physical appetites and higher goals, and ethics necessarily involves disciplining our natural inclinations in the service of our articulated ideals. Here is that aspect of ethics which supports idealism. Just so, the partial conjunction between health, strength and vitality on the one hand, and human happiness and excellence on the other, makes an ethical naturalism plausible. But neither of these meta-ethical positions is stable. A naturalism such as Aristotle's which seeks to ground our ethical judgments in human nature eventually confronts indeterminate aspects of human nature which allow for various sorts of development and ways in which following ideals may improve (rather than perfect) human nature. An ethical idealism such as Kant's, on the other hand, cannot explain why an individual should follow moral rules "legislated" by his ideal nature. Kant's justification seems to rest, finally, on an implicit equation of our ideal with our real selves, which individuals are always free to deny. In somewhat different ways, both Aristotle and Kant are brought up short by our actual, yet incompletely determined, human nature.

In the end, this difficulty in specifying a meta-ethical position from which to clearly derive normative conclusions rests on the impossibility of privileging either our ideals or our human nature. Thoreau, to his credit, keeps worrying the problem in *Walden*. Even the idealistic "Higher Laws" begins with the assertion: "I found in myself, and still find, an instinct toward a higher, or, as it is named, spiritual life, as do most men, and another toward a primitive rank and savage one, and I reverence them both. I love the wild not less than the good" (210). Those inclined to take "Higher Laws" as moving from a false or "lower" naturalism to a true or "higher" idealism, should remember that the following chapter, "Brute Neighbors," returns us again to nature and particularity. Also, note Thoreau's reversal of the higher/lower dualism in "Heaven is under our feet as well as over our heads" and elsewhere.

Taken as a whole, I think *Walden* supports a dialectical view of this issue. We attend to our human nature for information on how to improve our lives. That is what Thoreau is asking his neighbors to do in the first few pages of the book. He wants them to ask themselves if they are emotionally satisfied and physically flourishing: whether they are *actually* happy. This will suggest possible improvements. Yet even as we interrogate our experience, we must "have some faith left which belies that experience" (9). Because "the greatest gains and values are farthest from being appreciated. We easily come to doubt if they exist. We soon forget them. They are the highest reality" (216). Still, human nature is not infinitely plastic and we must try our ideals in life. So the dialectic continues.

The problem, obviously, is that once we no longer privilege either human nature or our ideals, then ethical indeterminacy and uncertainty, which seemed merely a matter of temporary ignorance, threaten to become permanent aspects of the human condition. Yet that seems to be our situation. This is because new

ideals are always possible and cannot be ruled out *a priori*, because human nature itself is slowly changing, and because no privileging of the one over the other can be accepted. But then new questions arise: What is the value of pursuing greater clarity or consistency in our lives? Why believe our efforts to know ourselves will help us to live better lives? Perhaps the strongest justification for such efforts is simply a pragmatic belief that we will live better lives if we make them. *Walden* provides stirring calls to "know thyself" and live a life of integrity, and beyond these, Thoreau's example of a life lived in obedience to these calls. (At the same time, it gives us the character of Alek Therien, who calls such moral striving into question: 144-50).

[4] Not only does Locke make human use all-important, he slights higher, non-consumptive human uses and the basic ecosystem services such as clean air and water on which human life depends. Recent scientific calculations put nature's contributions to human economic productivity much higher.

[5] Thoreau of course realized that white settlement had brought great changes to the landscape. The towering white pines were gone, as were the catamount, the wolf and even the deer. Still, parts of the landscape remained, if not pristine, *wild*: not primarily the product of human manipulation and control, but largely the scene of spontaneous natural productions.

[6] "The Ponds" suggests that a correct environmental ethics must be holistic: valuing wholes as well as individuals, ponds as well as woodchucks. Contemporary environmental ethicists such as Holmes Rolston (1988) have tried to affirm such holism. But it has proven easier for philosophers to extend attention and concern to non-human individuals than to comprehend and appreciate non-human or more-than-human wholes, such as species, particular places or ecosystems. Such wholes are more loosely integrated and difficult to demarcate. It is not clear that a forest or a pond can have "interests" which may be harmed. Perhaps most important, modern ethicists are more used to valuing individuals than collective entities (in this they differ significantly from ancient ethicists, who usually placed the civic or collective good above the good of individuals). For better and for worse, we live in an individualistic age.

Still, I believe Thoreau is right to suggest that ethical holism is a necessary part of getting right with nature. Perhaps one way to meet the difficulty here is to temporarily set aside the theoretical effort to ethically value wholes and to ask instead how we might value them concretely and actually. We may then see *Walden* as a veritable how-to manual for appreciating natural wholes, from woodchucks and trees to ponds and forests. *Walden* suggests that even partial success in such ethical appreciation may make us better people: more knowledgeable, more aware, more alive.

We need to remember that such a holistic ethic need not entail only sacrifices, but may really be necessary for our happiness. If we value the various natural communities to which we belong, we may sometimes need to sacrifice

individuals' interests to community interests. This will often be for our own good in the long run, since our flourishing is intimately bound up with the flourishing of larger wholes. We cannot live healthy lives in polluted environments. We cannot have a rich experience or knowledge of nature without rich, accessible natural environments to explore. Thus valuing nature holistically may be in our enlightened self-interest. This is a theme that contemporary environmental ethicists need to develop more fully.

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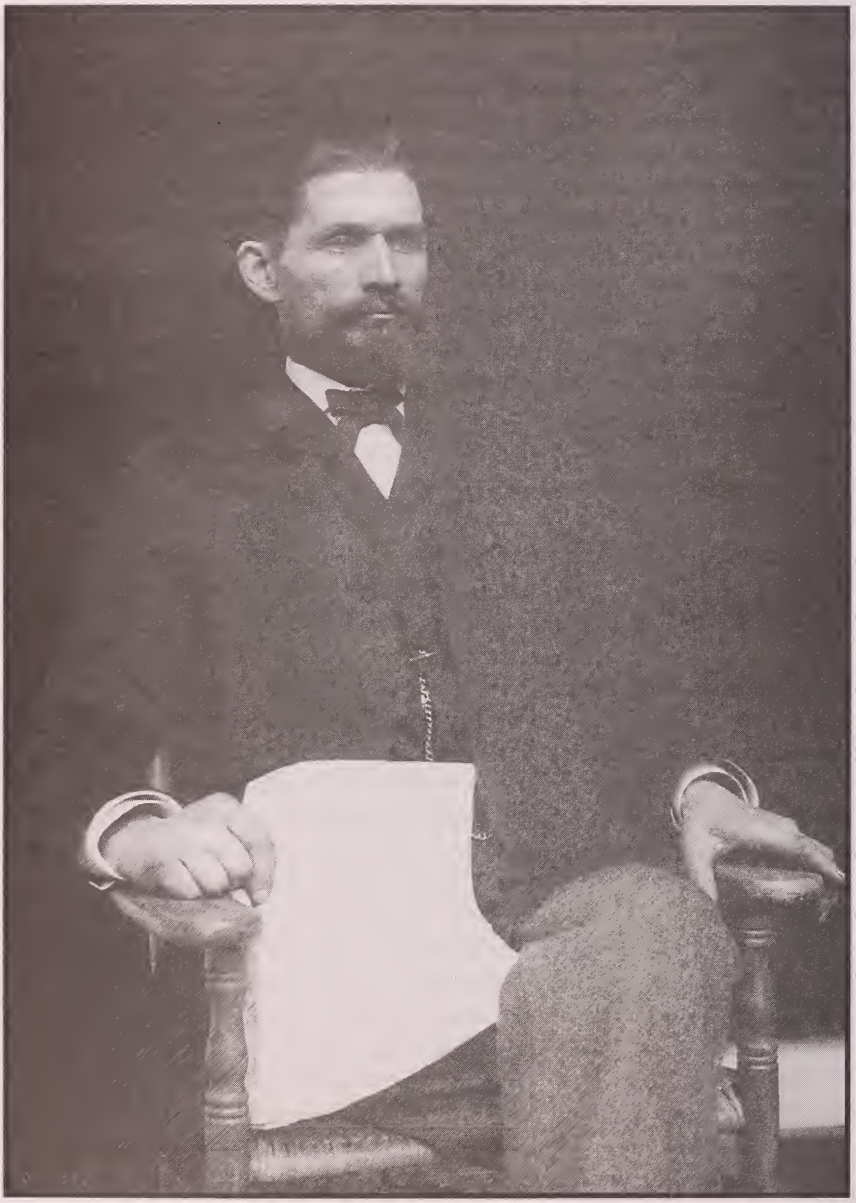


William Henry Hunt
(photograph by Alfred Munroe)
Courtesy Concord Free Public Library

A Concord Farmer Looks Back: the Reminiscences of William Henry Hunt

edited by Leslie Perrin Wilson

Introduction

The Social Circle in Concord, a private men's club established in 1782 and still in existence today, periodically publishes in book form biographies of members who have died since the appearance of its most recent volume of memoirs. Because many individuals at the center of Concord's political and social life have belonged to the organization, these memoirs written by current members constitute important community documentation.

As the designated Social Circle biographer of eighty-six year old William Henry Hunt, Concord historian and author Allen French was aware late in 1925 that he did not have much more time to draw out his elderly subject on the details of his life. Moreover, French knew that retired farmer Hunt was reticent about personal matters. Feeling some urgency, he wrote to Hunt in Belmont, Massachusetts, on 13 January 1926, asking him to "write me an account of Concord as you remember it before you took to wandering! Concord in your boyhood, Concord in your early manhood."[1]

Hunt took pleasure in fulfilling French's request. He prepared a manuscript of sixty-four leaves, written in a remarkably strong hand for a man pushing ninety, coherent from start to finish. He described his family's farm on Punkatasset Hill as it was in his youth, and also the district school system in which he had been educated. Today, the manuscript he passed on to French is in the Concord Free Public Library Special Collections.[2]

William Henry Hunt died 27 July 1926, not long after he completed the reminiscences that Allen French had solicited. On 6 June 1926, French had written to him: " ... you have certainly painted in my mind a most interesting picture of the house and people of your boyhood, which I am very glad to have seen. In the course of time it shall be passed on to other Concord people: it ought to be printed. You know that certain worthies—Judge Keyes, Girndall [Grindall] Reynolds, George Tolman, and others—have made some very vivid pictures of old Concord.

Doctor Jarvis also, and Albert Wood. I feel that you have carved for yourself a niche beside theirs" (Allen French Papers).

In preparing his memoir, French not only drew upon his subject's manuscript reminiscences, but also on letters Hunt had written him, on information supplied by Hunt's niece Mary R. Jacobs, and on his acquaintance with Hunt as a fellow Social Circle member. Printed in 1940 in the Fifth Series of *Memoirs of Members of the Social Circle in Concord*, French's biography included extensive quotations from the manuscript written by William Henry Hunt just before his death. But Hunt's manuscript—a remarkable piece of writing—has never been published in entirety. It is here printed in full for the first time, with introduction and annotations.

French's initial reaction to Hunt's manuscript was on the mark. The piece provides insight into a variety of topics related to life in nineteenth-century Concord. It is powerful social history written by a sensitive, intelligent observer, a man keenly aware of the forces—agricultural, social, political, economic, and personal—operative during his lifetime. It highlights the various changes that transformed the Concord of Emerson and Thoreau—the Concord of Hunt's childhood and young manhood—into a very different world. In his narrative Hunt tackled a much narrower slice of Concord social history than did John Shepard Keyes or Edward Jarvis. He described only the life that he had lived personally and had known intimately, and he wrote about it philosophically, in an almost literary fashion, in contrast to others who produced more systematic and comprehensive reminiscences.

Hunt's life followed anything but a predictable path. Through native intelligence, initiative, and some major good luck, he was able actively to shape its course. In the end his was a transcendent—indeed a transcendental—story of self-realization and the triumph of spirit over circumstances. But Hunt chose to tell Allen French only about his beginnings, not his evolution. He was a private man. Moreover, he may have assumed that the community standing he achieved in maturity was sufficient evidence of his development.

Nevertheless, the details of his later life are essential to appreciating the reminiscences of his youth. Allen French's thoughtful and sympathetic Social Circle sketch constitutes a good beginning. But the passage of more than sixty years since its publication provides the perspective necessary for a more analytical understanding of Hunt's life. Moreover, French could not or did not consult certain sources that are now readily accessible. The following introduction is based on French's memoir, on the correspondence and other materials he used in writing it, and on a variety of records, papers, and publications in the collections of the Concord Free Public Library and elsewhere (vital records; assessors' records; church records; records of the Middlesex Agricultural Society, the Concord Farmers' Club, the Massachusetts Horticultural Society, Concord's District Library Association No. 7, and other organizations; town reports; genealogical sources; newspapers and clippings; federal census records; historical and biographical reminiscences of Concord by John Shepard Keyes and Edward Jarvis; and other related materials, both manuscript and printed).

The Hunt Family

William Henry Hunt was born in Concord 21 June 1839[3] and baptized in the First Parish Church 30 September 1840 (First Parish records, Series I, transcribed records, 438). A seventh generation Concordian, he was descended from seventeenth-century English settler William Hunt, who bought land on and around Punkatasset Hill, on what is now Monument Street, from Concord founder and first minister Peter Bulkeley.[4] Generations of Hunts lived at Punkatasset and farmed the land until the early twentieth century, when William Henry sold the property. According to Hunt family tradition, on 19 April 1775 food was provided for colonial troops at the Hunt farmhouse,[5] which stood between the location of the house now numbered 709 Monument Street and that of the barn complex at 775 Monument.

William Henry's grandfather Nehemiah was born in 1764, his uncle Nehemiah in 1792, his father Daniel in 1796. About 1820, Nehemiah, Jr., built for himself and his family a second, larger house adjoining the ancestral farmhouse, which Nehemiah, Sr., retained. Assessors' records indicate that Nehemiah, Sr., passed his house on to Daniel later in the 1820s. Daniel lived there with his wife, parents, and growing family. Nehemiah, Jr., sold his interest in the farm to Daniel, who managed it until William Henry took it over in the 1860s.

In 1825, Daniel Hunt married Clarissa Flint Cutter, a widow with a young daughter. Clarissa Flint had married Saunders (or Sanders) Cutter in 1819. In addition to their daughter (also named Clarissa), they had a son, Otis Saunders Cutter, who died in January of 1822, four days after his father's death. Daniel and Clarissa Hunt had ten children, born between 1826 and 1843:[6] Martha Emmeline (born 1826); Mary Ann (1828); Adeline (1829); Daniel Otis (1831); Charles Francis (1832; died 1833); Louisa Benjamin (1834); Charles Francis (1837); Ellen Maria (1837); William Henry (1839); and Emma Cutter (1843).[7]

Daniel Hunt and His Son as Farmers—A Study in Contrasts

In his reminiscences, William Henry Hunt presented his father as sober and hard-working, but lacking the capital and the temperament necessary to adapt to changing methods of farming and of marketing produce. Daniel Hunt had his hands full with running his farm and providing for his large family. He was not, however, among Concord's poorest residents. The 1855 assessors' records show that he had a total valuation of $4,726, including real estate (house, barn, shed, and seventy-five acres) worth $3,000, and personal estate (cattle, two swine, four shares Fitchburg Railroad stock, money at interest, and a deposit in his wife's name in the Middlesex Savings Bank) worth $1,726. Certainly many other farmers assessed in the same year had higher—some much higher—total valuations. But Hunt was

Daniel Hunt house (right) and Nehemiah Hunt house (left) on Punkatasset Hill

(photograph by Alfed Munroe)

Courtesy Concord Free Public Library

not at the bottom of the economic heap. His major difficulty was that he had both many children to feed, clothe, and educate and, because of the size of his family, insufficient resources to improve upon increasingly outdated methods of managing his farm. Moreover, he did not have enough sons to ease the burden of farm work and to help generate surplus for market. He was locked into a hard way of life, characterized by intense labor[8] and by little leisure to develop the higher sensibilities.

Having observed his father's struggles, William Henry Hunt understood in maturity that only those farmers who had money to invest in their farms and who were able and willing to adapt to changing market demands could thrive. He wrote in his reminiscences that "the results secured by each . . . farmer depended on several elements: first, on the fertility and ease of management of the farm and the capital available; second . . . on the farmer himself—his energy, . . . his readiness to adopt new methods of culture and new implements when proved to be better than the old, and his ability to make the necessary trades." Daniel Hunt could not, and perhaps also would not, expend the means to accommodate himself to the agricultural and economic developments of his time. His son, on the other hand, ultimately became a model progressive farmer.

Membership in agricultural societies was one indication of a nineteenth-century farmer's openness to change.[9] Concord farmers had a choice of two local organizations, the Middlesex Agricultural Society (formally known from 1820 until 1852 as the Society of Middlesex Husbandmen and Manufacturers, renamed in 1852) and the Concord Farmers' Club. Daniel Hunt's father and brother (Nehemiah, Sr., and Nehemiah, Jr.) belonged to the Middlesex Agricultural Society, but Daniel did not (Middlesex Agricultural Records, Series III). In contrast to his father, William Henry not only became a member of the Middlesex Agricultural Society in 1866 (Middlesex Agricultural records, Series III, Item 2, 57) and of the Concord Farmers' Club by its 1864/65 season (Concord Farmers' records, Series III), but also served as the society's secretary throughout the 1880s and into the early 1890s. Middlesex Agricultural Society records show that he judged grapes at its annual Cattle Show in 1880 and 1881, and took prizes during the 1880s for pears, quince, grapes, peaches, squash, plums, and apples—specifically, for the Hunt Russet, a long-keeping winter apple used for cider, associated with the early Hunts of Concord (Wheeler, *North Bridge Neighbors* 125-26).

Members of the Concord Farmers' Club met at each other's homes and listened as the host of a meeting gave a talk on some aspect of agriculture. The focus was on experimental crops and new techniques. Between 1865 and 1882, William Henry Hunt presented on a wide variety of topics—bees; "Stirring the Soil by Mechanical Means"; drainage; crop rotation; composting; irrigation and liquid manuring; the causes of apple failure; the value of experimental farming; the history of agriculture; "How best to Expend Money on the Farm"; peat; fertilizing the soil; and growing grapes (Concord Farmers' records, Series III). Along with Elijah Wood and Henry Flagg French, Hunt was a member of the Farmers' Club committee that wrote on 30 January 1874 to the Trustees of the Concord Free Public Library, offering a plaster bust by Daniel Chester French of

club president Simon Brown (Concord *Annual Reports*, 1874, 48). The bust is still part of the library's art collection.

William Henry Hunt belonged not only to local agricultural organizations, but to the Massachusetts Horticultural Society as well. He was elected a life member in 1880, and served on the society's Publication and Discussion Committee from 1882 to 1892 and its Vegetables Committee from 1893 to 1895 (Massachusetts Horticultural Society).

John Shepard Keyes—a man not given to unqualified praise of his contemporaries—described William Henry Hunt as "a leading horticulturist" (25). Hunt was able to do what his father had not attempted—to put the management of the family farm on a "scientific basis" (Jacobs, biographical form, Allen French Papers). He successfully responded to the growing demand for delicate vegetables (asparagus) and fruits (grapes) that could be transported by railroad to bigger markets beyond Concord and appears to have tapped into the dairy market as well.[10]

Perhaps significantly, Thoreau did not comment upon Daniel Hunt or his farm, even though he wrote of Punkatasset Hill and of people and places on and around it. He visited Minot Pratt's farm, which was three doors nearer town than Daniel Hunt's (Walling map), and he explored Estabrook and Ball's Hill. Had he noticed Daniel Hunt, Thoreau might well have counted him among those farmers who led "the meanest of lives," judged him a man obliged to devote his energies to subduing the land rather than living in harmony with it. Ultimately, capital and the freedom that it afforded to experiment placed William Henry in a less oppositional relationship with the land than his father had had.

The Education of William Henry Hunt

Daniel Hunt provided the basics for his family—food for his wife to put on the table, the wherewithal for her to clothe the children, and such educational advantages for them as he could afford. The young Hunts got the rudiments of learning in Concord's district school system. There is little doubt that Daniel Hunt valued reading and education, even if he himself had little formal schooling. William Henry Hunt wrote in his reminiscences, "My father was more given to reading than the average farmer." Records of District Library Association No. 7—a variation upon the school district library organizations that flourished briefly before the public library movement gathered momentum in the mid-nineteenth century (Shera 183-84, 240-41)—show that Daniel Hunt was the association's president from 1844 to 1847. (He was succeeded by Minot Pratt in 1848.) Moreover, William Henry emphasized that his father spent what he could on educating at least some of his children beyond the local public school system. Five attended "out of town academies,"[11] and one went to normal (that is, teachers' training) school. In attempting to improve his children's lot in life through education, Daniel Hunt was typical of New England farmers in the first half of the nineteenth century (Russell 194-96).

But Hunt's resources did not stretch far enough to provide extra opportunities for all of his children. William Henry was keenly aware that he was

not one of "the favored ones." He received his entire meager formal education in District School No. 7, more than half a mile from his home up Monument Street toward Carlisle.[12] His lasting disappointment over his limited schooling was apparent in a letter he wrote to Allen French on 3 February 1926, close to the end of his life: "At school I learned nothing" (Allen French Papers).

William Henry Hunt was intelligent and thoughtful. He learned to read and to think for himself despite his childhood circumstances. His intellectual horizons expanded steadily as he grew older. In maturity, through extensive reading, association with people more educated than himself, applied study of particular subjects, and travel, he parlayed his innate gifts into a level of culture and knowledge that far exceeded what might have been expected of him based on his early opportunities alone. The inadequacy of his family's means to nourish intellect and soul instilled in him a powerful sense of the importance of education and made self-culture a life-long habit.

As a child, William Henry developed an interest in natural science. He roamed the area near his home with Punkatasset neighbor Minot Pratt—farmer, original member of the Brook Farm utopian community, and botanist. Hunt's niece revealed that Pratt "helped him in the study of botany, and the collecting of ferns and plants"(Jacobs, biographical form, Allen French Papers). Hunt himself commented in his reminiscences, "How I tramped the woods and fields with him [Pratt] and his son Theodore in search of flowers." His association with Minot Pratt may well have encouraged a scientific approach to and understanding of plants that aided Hunt's later efforts to reinvigorate the family farm. Certainly it kindled a deep, emotional feeling for nature that stayed with him through the rest of his life.

In 1925, describing a stay in Switzerland almost half a century earlier, Hunt wrote ecstatically to Allen French of his experience of nature: "If I had not been already in love with Nature she would have won me there (31 December 1925, Allen French Papers). In the same letter, he waxed Thoreauvian: "Family, friends, acquaintances, come & go, but natur [sic] does not die; always at hand; always a friend[,] a teacher, a consoler. From youth to old age, from the dear, quiet New England landscape to the Omaha blizzard, from the top of the Youngfrau [sic] to the bottom of the Grand Canyon, wherever I have been I have been interested in nature, felt myself at home with her." Referring to the growing deafness that afflicted him as he aged, Hunt added poignantly, "If I cannot talk with men, I talk with the stars." It is not surprising that Thoreau's *Walden* was the first book that Hunt bought with his own money (Jacobs, biographical form, Allen French Papers).

The seriousness and extent of Hunt's private study of agriculture is apparent in his involvement in multiple agricultural organizations, in the range of topics on which he spoke before the Concord Farmers' Club, and in his successful production of modern crops and application of new techniques on his Punkatasset farm. His deliberate redirection of the management of the family farm provides a fine example of praxis—the union of learning and doing.

Although Allen French did not suggest it, William Henry Hunt's marriage in 1859 to a woman nine years older than himself was based in some degree on a

very young man's attraction to a woman who was both more educated and cultured than himself and who was also willing to mentor him. In the estimation of Hunt's niece Mary Jacobs, Elizabeth Baker Hunt was "a very cultivated woman with an unusual education for those days," and she "helped him [William Henry Hunt] develop in many ways" (biographical form, Allen French Papers). It was an unconventional marriage, but one that apparently nurtured Hunt.

As soon as he was financially able to do so, William Henry Hunt availed himself of the opportunities for self-culture provided by European travel. From 1878 to 1880, he traveled in Germany, Switzerland, and France. A week before his death in 1926, he wrote to Allen French about his stay in Paris: "Six months first in a hotel, then in a private family in Latin Quarter. Went to opera, the theater, College of France, streets, museums, ... Had a good time generally, as good as Switzerland only very different. Quite a contrast to my strenuous N. England farmer life. I knew very little French, but I used to go to lectures at the College & got so I could follow pretty well" (18 July 1926, Allen French Papers). Hunt soaked up French language and culture by the immersion method, a tried and true educational technique, much faster and more efficient than classroom learning.

Hunt's concern with education expressed itself in service on Concord's School Committee. A member of the committee in the 1870s up to the time of his European trip, in the late 1880s, through the 1890s, and into the first decade of the twentieth century, he was its secretary from the fiscal year 1887/1888 to 1900/1901 (printed Concord School Committee reports). According to Allen French, Hunt displayed a philosophical as well as a practical interest in the learning process. French reported in his Social Circle memoir that Hunt not only attended sessions of Alcott's Concord School of Philosophy, but that he also spoke there on education.[13]

The Hunt Daughters

While William Henry Hunt was able to rise above the early constraints on his personal development, his sisters found it more difficult to do so. Traditional farm life made little allowance for individuality and personal aspiration for the boys of the family and even less for the girls. Their father's desire to educate his children to the best of his ability did not alter the fact that his daughters' future prospects were limited to marriage, teaching school, domestic positions, work in the mills in nearby Lowell or Lawrence (Russell 192-93), or spinsterhood within the family circle. Martha Emmeline, born in 1826, was the oldest child of Daniel and Clarissa Hunt. Her story—hitherto considered primarily from the point of view of Nathaniel Hawthorne, for whom it was grist to the literary mill—provides a dark and fascinating counterpoint to that of her younger brother, underscoring the significance of gender in an individual's ability to transcend difficult circumstances in the nineteenth century. Martha was a casualty of the more limited scope of action open to women than to men, and likely also of a family tendency toward depression.

In 1845, when William Henry was six years old, nineteen year old Martha was a teacher in Concord's district school system.[14] As reported in the 11 July 1845 issue of the *Concord Freeman*, on 9 July—less than a week after Thoreau had declared his personal independence by moving into his Walden cabin—she left home early in the morning but failed to show up at her schoolhouse. Later in the day, a search party found her bonnet and shoes on the bank of the Concord River, not far from where it flowed past her father's farm. Her body was recovered from the river about 11:00 p.m. The brief account in the *Freeman* referred to her death as a "melancholy suicide." The piece in the *Freeman* would likely have been the only public notice of this private tragedy had not Nathaniel Hawthorne been one of those who searched the river for the girl's body.

At the time of Martha Hunt's suicide, Hawthorne was living at the Old Manse, his Concord residence from 1842 to 1845. He recorded his vivid impressions of the search for and recovery of her body in a lengthy journal entry revealing how powerfully he was struck by the incident (*American Notebooks* 261-67). Hawthorne both reacted to the suicide on a human level and responded to its innately literary elements. He presented an abundance of factual detail and sympathetic emotion in his account and also developed motivation and atmosphere. He later drew heavily on this journal entry in describing the search for the body of the strong, passionate Zenobia—a character modelled to some degree on Margaret Fuller—in his *Blithedale Romance* (1852).

Ellery Channing came for Hawthorne at the Manse between 9:00 and 10:00 p.m. on 9 July. The two set out by boat for the spot where Martha Hunt's personal effects had earlier been discovered. Joshua Buttrick ("General Buttrick") and a younger man joined Channing and Hawthorne in the boat. Others—including a "young brother of the deceased, apparently about twelve or fourteen years old" (probably Daniel Otis Hunt)—remained on the bank. The party on the river probed the bottom with hooked poles and a hay-rake. The body was found in deep water, undisturbed by the river's current, and was towed back to land. Hawthorne described its condition in graphic detail, particularly the rigor mortis that had frozen the girl in her death throes and prevented her from being laid out in a natural position. He wrote of the construction of a makeshift bier and of the grim procession back to the Hunt farmhouse, where Mrs. Minot Pratt and others waited to prepare the body for burial.

The piece in the *Concord Freeman* attributed the suicide to a "momentary fit of insanity." All other accounts—Hawthorne's journal entry, William Henry Hunt's oblique reference in his reminiscences to the oppressive constriction felt by his sisters, a description of the "village tragedy" included by former Brook Farmer and sometime Concord resident George William Curtis in his *Homes of American Authors* (1854) and later in his *Literary and Social Essays* (1895), and the draft of an 1891 lecture by Annie Sawyer Downs, who had lived in Concord as a young girl during the 1840s—agree that the cause lay in the breach between the girl's talents and expectations and the realities of her life. She was intelligent and sensitive, but had been born into circumstances that did not encourage sustained development

"Foliage along river from shore at Punkatasset"
(photograph by Herbert Wendell Gleason, 26 May 1900)
Courtesy Concord Free Public Library

and self-expression. Hawthorne wrote that she was "a girl of education and refinement, but depressed and miserable for want of sympathy—her family being an affectionate one, but uncultivated, and incapable of responding to her demands." Hawthorne noted her "melancholic temperament," her difficulty in controlling a class of sixty students, and the fact that she left behind a diary "said to exhibit ... many high and remarkable traits." (The diary has never come to light.)

George William Curtis—who boarded in the Nathan Barrett house on Punkatasset (next to the Hunt farm) when he first came to Concord with his brother Burrill in 1844, and who later lived in Edmund Hosmer's household and then in Minot Pratt's (Curtis, *Early Letters* 70, 75, 82)—painted a dramatic picture of Martha's situation. He presented her as "a girl of delicate and shy temperament" and revealed that she "excelled so much in study that she was sent to a fine academy in a neighboring town, and won all the honors of the course" ("Hawthorne," *Literary and Social Essays* 55). (The identity of the academy remains undiscovered.) She loved the social life of the school, where she met "a refinement and cultivation, a social gayety and grace, which were entirely unknown in the hard life she had led at home ... She enjoyed this life to the full ... It was a sphere for her capacities and talents. She shone in it, and the consciousness of a true position and general appreciation gave her the full use of all her powers." But school days inevitably came to an end, and she returned to the "dreary round of petty details, in the incessant drudgery of a poor farmer's household, with no companions of any sympathy . . . with no opportunity of retirement and cultivation, for reading and studying." Unable to reacclimate herself to life on the farm, Curtis continued, she became "an inmate of a refined and cultivated household in the village" (which household is unknown), but felt out of place there, too. She then tried opening a school for young children, but was unable to make a success of it. The local farmers thought her a "strange girl, and wondered at ... a farmer's daughter who was not content to milk cows and churn butter and fry pork." The "good clergyman of the town" (Barzillai Frost) interested himself in her situation but did not gain her confidence. Despairing at the necessity of "doling out a, b, c, to a wild group of boys and girls" in Concord's district school system, "she found that she could not untie the Gordian knot of her life, and felt, with terror, that it must be cut."

Annie Sawyer Downs told a similar story, but went a step farther in explicitly connecting Martha with Emerson and his transcendental associates.[15] She wrote that Martha Hunt's family lived "a little outside the village circle" and was "somewhat straitened in money matters," although "of unquestioned respectability and innate refinement" (98). Downs added, "This daughter . . . became interested in Margaret Fuller, the Channings and Emersons, while they in turn lent her books and endeavored to brighten her somewhat monotonous life. But she became discouraged and one summer morning walked down to the Concord river and ended her misery in its sluggish bosom."

Although neither the Channings nor the Pratts lived at Punkatasset until 1845, the year of Martha's suicide, there is nothing far-fetched about the idea that she was acquainted with those in Emerson's circle. With a population of 1,784 in 1840 (Hurd 605), Concord was a small town and a close community. Its residents

and frequent visitors knew one another. People's lives were intertwined in various ways. Despite the fact that they did not live near the village center, the Hunts, like other farm families, had a place in town life. The children attended church and Sunday school as well as District School No. 7, sold berries and delivered butter, and did other errands for their parents. Half sister Clarissa Cutter lived in and helped to manage the Main Street household of Judge Ebenezer Rockwood Hoar. George Frisbie Hoar (Rockwood's brother) painted an idealized but essentially accurate picture of Concord in the 1830s: "The town was as absolute a democracy, in the best sense of the word, as was ever upon earth. The people, old and young, constituted one great family. They esteemed each other because of personal character, and not on account of wealth, on social position, or holding office. The poorest boy in town was the equal of the richest in the school and in the playground" (39).

Nevertheless, gifted though Martha Hunt was, the democracy of school did not translate into adult freedom to apply her talents. She longed for an intellectual life that could not be sustained without social and economic independence, which at nineteen she did not enjoy and clearly did not expect to attain. Ironically, in elevating her awareness of her abilities and validating her yearning for a life of the mind, Concord's transcendental thinkers may have contributed to her suicide. Downs wrote that Martha's death "cast a shadow upon the Concord philosophy which time alone dispelled. It was said, despairing of reconciling its fascinating ideas with the sombre realities of life, she sought in suicide relief from struggle" (98).

Martha was not the only Hunt daughter who found her situation difficult to bear. Her sister Ellen, also a teacher, who according to Allen French was clubfooted ("William Henry Hunt" 261), drowned herself in April of 1861,[16] at the age of twenty-three. French also wrote that a third Hunt sister drowned accidentally. (Concord records suggest that this was fifty-nine year old Clarissa Cutter, half sister of William Henry and Martha Hunt.[17]) Almost unbelievably, one of the daughters of Nehemiah Hunt, Jr., Daniel's brother, also committed suicide by drowning.[18] Of Martha's remaining sisters, Mary Ann and Adeline died spinsters—Mary Ann in 1876 at age forty-seven, Adeline in 1893 at sixty-three (Concord death cards). Louisa Benjamin moved to California, married John Orange Taplin in 1861, had four children, and died in 1876 (Warner). Emma married Lewis Flint in Lowell in July of 1865 (Concord marriage card). All three Hunt sons who survived to maturity fared far better than their sister Martha.

Margaret Fuller's *Woman in the Nineteenth Century* was published in the year of Martha Hunt's suicide. At a later time, the cumulative efforts of feminists like Fuller might have made it easier for Martha to harness her talents and seize her chances for advancement. But living as a dependent in Daniel Hunt's overburdened household in 1845, she felt thwarted and trapped. As his reminiscences make clear, William Henry Hunt was not so very different from his sister in temperament and capabilities. But he ultimately prospered because as a man he was responsible for himself and consequently freer to break from established patterns, to experiment, and to risk change.

Daniel Hunt's Abolitionism

William Henry Hunt recalled in his reminiscences that Punkatasset neighbors visited one another for quilting parties, games, and (particularly during the winter months) conversation and companionship by the hearth. He wrote fondly of these informal fireside gatherings: "Of all the impressions received by my slowly unfolding mind in my childhood surroundings, there are none more firmly imprinted, clearly cut, or more free from all sorrowful suggestions."

But the issue of slavery sometimes disturbed the cordial atmosphere of these visits. Hunt wrote, "The troublesome question invaded our peaceful neighborhood and caused more division than anything that had arisen before ... Sometimes even by the fireside the subject could not be kept out altogether." He observed that his father, an ardent abolitionist and "the first farmer in the neighborhood to become interested in [the cause]," could hold his own when the subject came up. He also suggested that his half sister's employment in the abolitionist Hoar household influenced their father's attitude toward slavery.

Hunt remembered that his father subscribed to the Washington antislavery journal the *National Era*, in which *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was first published serially in 1851 and 1852, and that one of his sisters recited verses from James Russell Lowell's *The Biglow Papers* for family and guests. These recollections of the Hunt family's abolitionism are important inasmuch as they highlight the underdocumented fact that antislavery sentiment in Concord cut across economic and class lines. However, it is unclear to what degree Daniel Hunt's convictions were expressed in activism. Based on what his son wrote, it is reasonable to assume that he was a Whig/Republican rather than a Democrat, and that he registered his opinions accordingly when it came time to vote. But his name appears nowhere in the records of the Middlesex County Anti-Slavery Society and has not been associated with the Underground Railroad in Concord.

Nevertheless, there are indications that the Hunts helped make Punkatasset something of a human rights and antislavery stronghold. Three members of Daniel Hunt's family (his wife Clarissa and daughters Louisa and Ellen) as well as two nieces (Charlotte and Caroline, daughters of his brother Nehemiah) signed a petition in the spring of 1849 in support of Washington Goode, a Boston Black convicted of murdering another man in a fight over a prostitute and sentenced to death.[19] (Presumably Daniel Hunt's name does not appear on the petition because farm chores kept him from the house during daylight hours, when the petition was presented for signature.) Moreover, John Shepard Keyes noted that "Dr. Howe and F.B. Sanborn took refuge" in the Nehemiah Hunt house "after the John Brown raids when the U.S. Senator Mason was trying to get their evidence for his committee on that subject" (23). If Keyes's information is accurate, the Hunts were thus silently involved in one of Concord's most visible antislavery episodes.

William Henry Hunt's "Strange Romance" and Marriage

William Henry Hunt remained in his father's household until 1859, when he married Elizabeth Baker, described by Allen French in his Social Circle memoir as a widow (262).[20] Born 14 November 1830 in Philadelphia to Thomas McEuen and Anne (Annie) Izard McEuen,[21] Elizabeth Baker was close to a decade older than her husband, who was only twenty when they were married in Concord on 25 November 1859 (Concord marriage card). Moreover, she was the mother of a son, Theodore, born in New York, who was about eight at the time of the marriage[22]—old enough to be mistaken for Hunt's younger brother rather than his stepson. According to John Shepard Keyes, Elizabeth Baker lived near the Hunts, in the building that had been used as a school by Marianne Ripley (26), sister of Brook Farm founder George Ripley. (The structure no longer stands.) Elizabeth and William Hunt lived in the place after their marriage until the early 1880s, when they built a large new house across the road from the old family farmhouse.

Mary Jacobs made it clear that the Hunt family was not eager for William Henry to marry Elizabeth Baker. She wrote, "My Uncle's family were much distressed at first, at the thought of his marriage—(being a boy of twenty), to an older woman, mother of a son six or seven years old;—but he says, then, although he was under age, they knew he must 'have his own way'" (7 November 1926, Allen French Papers). The age difference between Hunt and Baker, the responsibilities presented by her bringing a son to the marriage, and perhaps even the fact that she had come to Concord from elsewhere—that she was an outsider—might well have raised objections within the Hunt family. Even decades later, in his Social Circle biography of Hunt, Allen French described their courtship as a "strange romance" (262).

Characteristically, William Henry Hunt remained mute on the circumstances of his marriage and on his relationship with his wife. The details of how and why Elizabeth Baker came to Concord are unknown. However, there are hints of why she might have been drawn to marry a very young man of little education, no means, and no experience of the world.

In 1922, artist Edward Emerson Simmons—a son of the Reverend George Frederick Simmons and Mary Emerson Ripley Simmons—published his autobiography *From Seven to Seventy: Memories of a Painter and a Yankee*, the first chapter of which dealt with his early life in Concord. Discussing his mother's independence, Simmons—who grew up in and next to the Old Manse—wrote: "A woman had come to Concord, with no husband, and given birth to a child. This, for New England at that time, was a terrible scandal. The boy was my age [Simmons was born in Concord in 1852]. All the other boys whispered behind his back as if he had been in jail, although by this time his mother was properly married to a young farmer up on Barret's Hill [Punkatasset]. No one ever spoke to her in church or bowed. My mother, very quietly, every summer, put on her best clothes and walked the mile or more up the hill to call" (Simmons 8).

Although Elizabeth Baker's son was not born in Concord, Simmons's chronology and most of the circumstances in his account strongly suggest that he

referred to Mrs. Hunt in this passage. While Simmons is not an especially reliable source, there is probably some kernel of truth in his assessment of Elizabeth Baker's social standing. Whether or not she was truly a widow, and whether or not her son was illegitimate (as Simmons insinuated), the attitudes of the time likely cast suspicion on the respectability of a woman living and raising a child on her own. In marrying William Henry Hunt, Elizabeth Baker probably sought community acceptance for herself and her son.

There is no indication that the Hunts' marriage was other than a happy one. The two lived together until Mrs. Hunt's death in 1903, bore the loss of their only child, raised Theodore to adulthood, traveled extensively in Europe, and otherwise enjoyed the fruits of prosperity as a couple. And if Elizabeth Baker gained respectability through the alliance, William Henry Hunt, too, benefited enormously. Their marriage not only provided intellectual and emotional guidance, but also radically altered his financial situation, gave him the freedom to make conscious decisions about his life, and ultimately enhanced his place in the community.

Elizabeth Baker Hunt's father was well off. John Shepard Keyes reported that at her father's death in the 1870s, she inherited "a large property, fine library and much handsome old furniture" (26). (Concord assessors' records for 1875 show the sudden addition to William Henry Hunt's property of "Furniture and library.") The Hunts went to Europe on her father's money and built themselves a new house. William Henry's reputation as a successful experimental farmer and his consequent position as a Concord town leader derived from his good fortune in marrying a woman whose inheritance enabled him to put the family farm on a new footing.

Concord may initially have shunned Elizabeth Baker, but after her marriage to Hunt she was gradually included within its fold. As her husband became increasingly involved in town life, so did she. With no apparent embarrassment in referring to the lady, Lidian Emerson wrote her daughter Edith on 14 August 1868 that "Mrs. Wm. Hunt's silver was taken a few days since" (Emerson 259). In the same year, Elizabeth Hunt became a member of the Concord Female Charitable Society (Charitable Society records, Vol. I.a.8), a Concord woman's organization founded in 1814 to provide aid to the local needy, to encourage their religious and moral development, and to offer members the opportunity to socialize. She paid her dues, attended meetings at the homes of leading ladies of the town—among them Mrs. Ebenezer Rockwood Hoar, Mrs. Francis Gourgas, and Mrs. George Merrick Brooks—and served as the society's North Quarter manager from 1884 to 1886.

In 1885, just before the two hundred and fiftieth anniversary celebration of Concord's incorporation, Mrs. Hunt assisted her husband in organizing and hosting the Hunt family reunion in the Concord Town Hall on 12 August 1885 (*Commemorative Reunion* program). At the exercises, William Henry Hunt, a member of the Committee of Arrangements for the reunion, delivered brief remarks. Elizabeth Hunt, a member of the "Ladies' Co-operative Committee," wrote a hymn that was sung by the "Hunt Glee Club" and also recited a poem that she had penned.

After the program, the couple opened the ancestral farmhouse to visitors from far and near, all descendants of Concord settler William Hunt.

Although William Henry Hunt belonged to the Unitarian First Parish, Mrs. Hunt became a member of the Trinitarian Congregational Church on 31 December 1887 (Trinitarian Congregational archives, Vol. 2, 1868-1902). (Did she join a different church from her husband because she had a distinct denominational preference? Or was she unable to forget that she had endured—as Edward Simmons suggested—earlier social rejection by members of the First Parish?) She also took part in Middlesex Agricultural Society activities, serving in 1891 as a judge of fancy articles and needlework at the annual Cattle Show (Middlesex Agricultural records).

While there is sufficient documentation of her absorption into the community, Elizabeth Baker Hunt nevertheless remains essentially mysterious. William Henry Hunt, Allen French, and Mary Jacobs did not convey any real sense of her as a person and provided few concrete details of her life. If they intended to protect through silence the reputation of a woman vulnerable to criticism, they were successful.

Maturity and Prosperity

William and Elizabeth Hunt lived in Framingham, Massachusetts, from 1860 to 1861. Their only child, a son named William (Willie) was born on 5 March 1861 and died a few days later, on 9 March (Framingham Town Clerk's files). William Henry Hunt left no written response to this intensely emotional event. Mary Jacobs, however, wrote Allen French on 7 November 1926 that her uncle "cherished the memory of that baby boy all his life" (Allen French Papers). The Hunts later adopted a daughter, Emily, who (Jacobs reported) "showed signs of unusual promise" as a child but suffered some kind of emotional and mental decline as she grew older—yet another personal calamity that Hunt bore without comment. (At the time of William Henry Hunt's death, Emily was still alive, in the care of relatives in Medford, Massachusetts.) Theodore Baker (Mrs. Hunt's son) grew up with his mother and stepfather, traveled abroad with them, married a German girl, and moved to New York.

During the Civil War, William Henry Hunt enlisted in Company G of the 47th Massachusetts Volunteer Militia (Concord *Soldiers and Sailors* 15). He went to a training camp in Boxford, Massachusetts, and came down with typhoid pneumonia (Jacobs, biographical form, Allen French Papers). When well enough, he was sent to New Orleans to join his regiment, was put on guard duty outside the city, and eventually was afflicted with serious sunstroke, which ended his service. Like many Civil War veterans, he looked back on his military experience as (in the words of his niece) the "greatest discipline of his youth." Late in life, he commanded the Old Concord Post No. 180 of the G.A.R. (CFPL Obituary Scrapbook Vol. 2, 96, 101), marching in uniform in parades into his final year.

After the war, Hunt returned to Concord and devoted himself to running the family farm. He and his wife and stepson made their home in the former Marianne Ripley schoolhouse, where Mrs. Hunt had lived before their marriage. Clarissa Hunt (William Henry's mother) died in November of 1868, Daniel Hunt in January of 1873. Concord assessors' records for 1872 show that William Henry became owner of the old Hunt farmhouse and property shortly before his father's death. Later, he bought the adjoining Nehemiah Hunt place, as well as other parcels in the vicinity. He housed his hired farm help and their families in both buildings (Keyes 21, 23). Keyes wrote that the older part of the double house (occupied by Hunt's foreman, who was "sometimes Irish, and sometimes English or Norwegian") gradually fell into disrepair (21).

The Hunt farm became William Henry's despite the fact that he was the youngest of Daniel Hunt's sons. Daniel Otis, the oldest, would have been the logical heir. But he had succumbed to the lure of the West, which drew many young men away from New England in the nineteenth century.[23] In 1850 he had sailed from New York to San Francisco via Panama. He farmed for two years in Santa Clara County, returned to San Francisco, and worked in the dairy business. In 1863, he moved to St. Helena in Napa County, where he farmed again. He later became involved in the lumber trade and retired in 1872 (*History of Napa and Lake Counties* 490-91). Daniel Hunt's second son, Charles Francis, had died at the age of six months. His third son, Charles Francis, made a life for himself in Belmont, where he died in 1892 (Robbins, Hunt biographical/genealogical sheet).

William Henry Hunt struggled for some time with all the problems of running the old farm. But he was young, a hard worker, unencumbered by the large number of dependents his father had had to support, and eventually had the use of his wife's inheritance. He hired help and made necessary purchases and improvements. The nineteenth-century pattern of hiring men to do the work formerly accomplished by family farm labor (Gross 51) played itself out in Hunt's operation of the place. Mary Jacobs wrote that her uncle worked alongside his hired men and earned their respect (biographical form, Allen French Papers), thereby minimizing the potential for labor/management antagonism inherent in the situation (Gross 51).

By the mid-1870s, Hunt's father and father-in-law had died. He now had both property and significant financial resources at his command. From 1878 to 1880, he traveled in Europe with his wife and stepson. On their return, he built a new house, assumed a prominent role in Concord town affairs, and made major farm improvements at Punkatasset. An Assessor (1872/1873) and a member of Concord's Committee of Arrangements for the 1875 centennial celebration of the Concord Fight and of the subcommittee formed to invite neighboring towns (Concord *Proceedings at the Centennial Celebration* 21-22), he also served the town as a Selectman (1881/1882-1884/1885), an Overseer of the Poor (1872/1873-1875/1876, 1880/1881-1884/1885, 1889/1890-1906/1907), a Road Commissioner (1882/1883-1884/1885), and a member of the School Committee (many times between 1870/1871 and 1900/1901).[24] He became a member of the Social Circle

Farm hands at Hunt houses, Punkatasset
Courtesy Minute Man National Historical Park Archives

in 1882 and of the Concord Antiquarian Society at its founding in 1886.[25] In 1895, he and other Social Circle representatives were pallbearers at the funeral of fellow member Judge Ebenezer Rockwood Hoar (CFPL Obituary Scrapbook Vol. 1, 110-123).

The house that the Hunts built in the early 1880s—regarded as "elegant" by John Shepard Keyes—stood where the present 712 Monument Street is located today, diagonally across the road from the farmhouse in which William Henry had been born and raised. Keyes described it as "perhaps the best and most thoroughly built house on any farm in the town, with convenient out buildings, a great ornament to the hill of which he [Hunt] owns the greater part" (25). Alfred Winslow Hosmer photographed Hunt's fine new house and the planted slope behind it (Hosmer III.140). The 1900 federal census recorded that Hunt lived there with his wife, adopted daughter Emily (described as "at school"), a cousin, a niece, a boarder, a cook, a housekeeper, and a farm laborer.

Elizabeth Baker Hunt died in 1903. William Henry Hunt tried to maintain the life he had led before she died but finally decided to give the house up. He sold it to Thomas A. Eckfeldt, who enlarged it and established a private school for boys (St. Andrew's) there. It subsequently housed a girls' school, then again a boys' school (McAllister), which burned in 1923 (Keyes 25). The house now on the site was designed by Concord architect Harry Little and built in the 1930s (Concord Historical Commission, *Historic Resources Masterplan* 95). Hunt sold the old farmhouse and barn across the road and his uncle's house to Russell Robb and the Reverend Charles L. Hutchins, who tore them down (Jarvis 169, Adams Tolman annotation). In 1902, Robb built the house now at 709 Monument Street. Hutchins purchased the old Barrett farmhouse (now 775 Monument) in 1887 and, over the years, remodeled and expanded the house and improved the property in various ways. At the initiative and expense of Hutchins, the Town of Concord moved the road in front of his house sixty to seventy feet from its original location, so that Monument Street now passes farther from the site of the Hunt farmhouse than the old road ran.[26] Thus, almost as soon as William Henry Hunt made the wrenching decision to relinquish the property his family had held for hundreds of years, the built landscape of Punkatasset underwent major changes.

After divesting himself of his real estate, Hunt traveled extensively and visited his relatives in California. He maintained an address on Walden Street in Concord, stayed for extended periods at the Colonial Inn, and during his final years lived with his nephew and niece (Chandler R. Hunt and Dr. Emily F. Hunt) on Pleasant Street in Belmont.[27] Although deaf, he retained his faculties, his dignity, and his sense of humor until his death. He produced two lengthy pieces of writing in his eighties, a printed pamphlet of sixty-six pages titled *The German*[28] and his autobiographical reminiscences. *The German* (the manuscript of which was read by Edward Waldo Emerson, as Hunt's preface reveals) was written in reaction to and as an explanation of World War I. It reflects Hunt's deep and broad knowledge of European history. The reminiscences demonstrate his inclination to look back on his life philosophically, against the background of a changing world. Both

The house built on Monument Street by William Henry Hunt, diagonally across from the old Hunt houses

Courtesy Minute Man National Historical Park Archives

House built by William Henry Hunt (back view), showing Channing/ Robbins house (across road, to left), and (to right) old Hunt houses

(photograph by Alfred Winslow Hosmer)

Courtesy Concord Free Public Library

testify to a mind unclouded by age and to extraordinary sensitivity, intelligence, and powers of observation.

William Henry Hunt died in Belmont on 27 July 1926. His body was transported to Concord, and he was buried with military honors on 29 July in Sleepy Hollow Cemetery (Concord Cemetery Department records), in the plot next to Daniel Chester French's, where he rests with his wife, his infant son Willie, and Mary Wells (who had boarded with the Hunts). The flags in Concord were flown at half-mast in Hunt's honor.

Hunt left $25,000 to the Town of Concord "for the purpose of promoting the culture of school children by the erection of a gymnasium or otherwise."[29] In 1933, a committee was appointed to study the building of a gymnasium and two years later recommended that the Hunt legacy be combined with federal Public Works Administration funding to build the structure that Hunt had envisioned. The William Henry Hunt Memorial Gymnasium on Stow Street was ceremonially presented to the Concord School Committee on 9 October 1936. Turned over to the town by the School Department in the 1970s and extensively renovated in 1986 to serve as a community recreational center, the Hunt Gym still benefits Concord residents and municipal employees. Hunt expressed his commitment to balanced education not only through his bequest for a gymnasium for the children of the town but also in a legacy to the Concord Free Public Library for the purchase of scientific books. These were carefully considered gifts made in response to personal constraints encountered early and surmounted only with perseverance.

Although the Monument Street landscape has continued to change since William Henry Hunt's time, the fields at Punkatasset are currently stewarded by farmers who approach their occupation in a progressive and enlightened spirit similar to Hunt's. Organic farmers John and Gordon Bemis—descendants of the Reverend Charles L. Hutchins—display much the same combination of idealism and pragmatism that allowed Hunt to find fulfillment in working the land (McFadden).

Reminiscences of the Old Hunt House on Monument Street and of Life in Concord in the Mid-19TH Century

by William Henry Hunt

The transcription: *This transcription was prepared with the clear presentation of Hunt's train of thought as its main goal. Because the manuscript is essentially one long paragraph, all paragraphing was supplied. Some punctuation was supplied to enhance the flow of the narrative, and some edited out when it impeded readability. Inconsistencies of spelling, capitalization, and punctuation were made consistent and obvious spelling errors corrected, all without the use of brackets. However, all of Hunt's constructions were transcribed as written. His switching of tenses in recalling the built landscape and the home of his childhood was preserved because it so effectively conveys the immediacy and reality of his memories. Occasionally, when a sentence did not make sense without doing so, a word was supplied or a grammatical correction made, in brackets. Finally, because the introduction to this piece is intended to provide the context necessary for a meaningful reading of it, explanatory endnotes have been included only to convey information not contained in the introduction.*

Monument Street starts from the village of Concord, runs northerly, and at a little less than a mile from it, crosses the Concord River by Flint Bridge, then [continues] northeasterly on the north bank of the river, at some little distance from it, and at one and one half miles from the village passes over the southern slope of Punkatasset Hill.[30] On this hill, on the northern side of the street and about fifteen feet above it, stood the Hunt homestead, where many generations of Hunts were born, passed their childhood days, and then either deserted the home nest to take their place in the great, wide world, or settled down to cultivate the ancestral acres and continue the family line.

Those who left the farm for the world were no doubt induced to take the step by the hope of improving their fortunes where conditions were more favorable to the acquisition of wealth or distinction. At any rate, all could not remain on the farm. Whatever the success of those who left it to seek their fortunes abroad, for those who remained on the farm there was no brilliant prospect before them. There was no hidden wealth to be found beneath the soil, no oil, metals, nor any substance that could, with little labor, be turned into wealth. There was nothing but the soil itself and what it might produce, and that soil was of such a recalcitrant texture that only hard muscular labor and grim determination could transform it into profitable acres.

There are in New England many fertile fields, free from rocks and stones, which were cleared for crops without great labor, and which once cleared rewarded the cultivator liberally for his labor. There are also in New England uncounted acres so strewn with boulders and stones of all sizes as to make cultivation difficult and often impossible. Such acres may and often do have a fertile soil such as will

support a vigorous forest growth, for boulders are no hindrance to the growth of a forest.

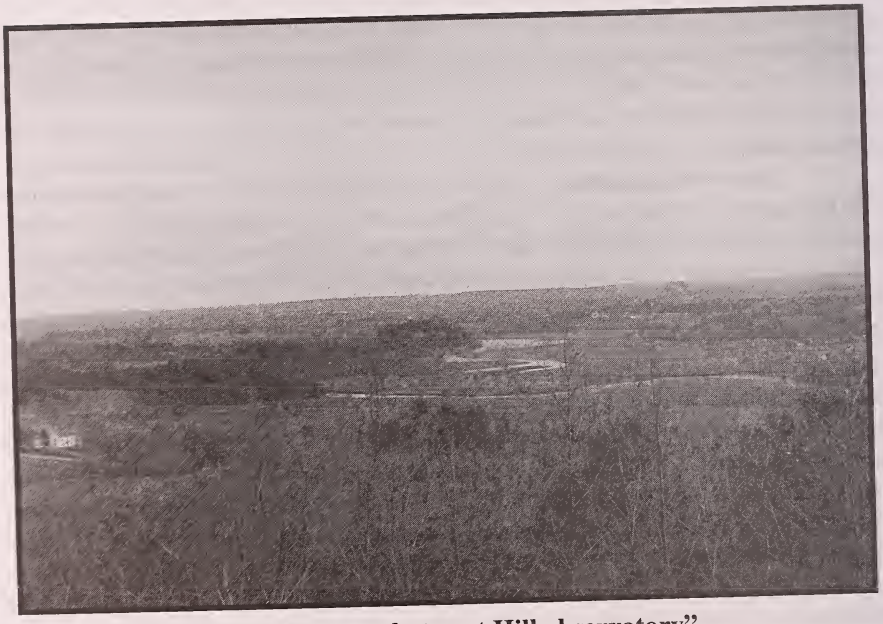
When the Indians occupied the land, their agricultural needs were limited, and the unlimited forests furnished them with abundant game. The white man who dispossessed them was an agriculturalist and land hungry, but he wanted land that he could cultivate profitably. As there was a limited supply of such land available, many of the early pioneers settled on farms where most of the land could not be profitably reclaimed, and then and there commenced a manly and desperate fight for existence with granite rocks.

Now, granite is hard and unyielding, not given to compromise, while muscle is soft and easily injured. Such a conflict would seem to be a one-sided affair where there could be but one result, but it was not so unequal as it appeared. For muscle had a powerful ally in the brain, one of the softest organs of the body, so soft indeed that nature, knowing the value of her latest and most perfect work and solicitous for its safety, enclosed it in a thick armor of bone, while she left the muscles unprotected outside. That brain, although composed of the softest material, is so constituted that it can develop a determination as firm and unyielding as granite itself.

That conflict has been raging since the settlement of the country and neither side has won a complete victory. There are in New England a great many abandoned farms, where brain and muscle, after a protracted fight, have given up the struggle, left the farm to relapse into forest, and removed to more favored regions. In many such cases capitalists have bought such farms and have helped nature in her work of reforestation. This movement was helped by the opening of the West to settlement, where unlimited tracts of fertile soil, needing only the removal of the forest to prepare it for the plow, could be had for the asking. The New England farmer could not continue the conflict with granite and at the same time meet the new competition. There are still in New England many cultivated fields where boulders may be seen lifting their defiant heads. On the other hand, there are unnumbered acres that have been cleared of them and the soil prepared for modern improved machines.

That conflict had at least one beneficial result for the country at large. It produced a vigorous race of men and, as the supply of farms that could be profitably cultivated was limited, there has been a steady stream flowing from those farms into the professions, into the great West to help in its development, into the cities for trade, where the vigor acquired by that contest had a wider and more profitable field of action.

The Hunt farm consisted of a tract sloping from near the top to the foot of the hill, with a little level land between the hill and the river. Most of the land was originally very stony, some of it was moderately stony, and there were a few acres fairly free from them. There was this in favor of the farm: the soil when cleared was fertile, suffered little from drought, produced good crops and fine fruits. It possessed another advantage. The view from the house and the fields was fine. As the house was only about one hundred feet above the river, the view, while not extensive, was sufficiently so as to be always attractive, and it made at times a



"East from Punkatasset Hill observatory"
(photograph by Herbert Wendell Gleason, 21 October 1899)
Courtesy Concord Free Public Library

beautiful picture. The view was made up of the slope to the river, the river and the wide meadows beyond, which at times were overflowed making a lake, and the slope on the other side, mostly covered with a variety of forest trees, where in autumn nature displayed her wonderful handiwork in leaf coloration. The view, though having a real value of its own, produced no crops. The rocks, though they might add to the interest of one interested only in the landscape, not only produced no crops. They were a tremendous obstacle to profitable cultivation.

On that farm, the conflict between brain and muscle on the one side and rocks on the other side never ended. Each owner did what he could toward clearing the land, but that continued struggle prevented him from receiving more than a bare living from the farm. Speaking generally of farming in this vicinity in the first half of the 19th century, it may be said that while all farmers worked under the same general conditions, the results secured by each individual farmer depended on several elements: first, on the fertility and ease of management of the farm and the capital available; second, the result depended mainly on the farmer himself—his energy, his moderation in the use of intoxicants, his readiness to adopt new methods of culture and new implements when proved to be better than the old, and his ability to make the necessary trades. When all these elements were favorable, the farmer was sure of liberal rewards. With energy, a rough farm might produce a bare living. A poor farmer on a rough farm could not succeed. The farm was no place for the slothful, the indulgent.

Of the management of the farm by my ancestors I know little except that they kept possession of it, made some permanent improvements, raised families of children, and, when they were gathered to their fathers, left it to some one of their sons.

I have a distinct recollection of my grandfather.[31] At one time, I must have been about six years old, he was at work in his woodpile and I was trying to help him with my hatchet. He, however, was very solicitous about me and my help, doubtless fearing lest I should do more execution on my own limbs than on the wood, and was not content till I desisted, which I was loath to do. I could not understand why I was not allowed to help when I was so anxious to. His funeral was in the winter of 1846 and I remember that there was a snow storm which caused considerable inconvenience.

The farm was divided between Nehemiah, the eldest and most favored son, and Daniel, my father. Nehemiah did not succeed and his land fell to my father by purchase. He [Daniel] conducted the farm from 1825 to 1866. His constitution was not rugged and in his later years he was subject to ill turns. He was industrious, abstemious, satisfied with the old style of farming, had not the faculty of making good trades, raised a large family of children, mostly girls. Thus equipped, while he kept things moving and provided liberally for the necessities, there was nothing left for luxuries and not very much for comforts, and the children, especially the daughters, as they developed felt themselves cramped in their position.

My mother, though having little book knowledge, was a woman in every sense of the word, was a devoted wife and mother, gave herself without reserve to her duties. She was twice married, had thirteen children, nine in less than thirteen

years. She was always cheerful, always a hard worker; and her life was shortened by her many severe duties.

My parents did the best they could for their children, but conditions limited their power in that direction. One child attended normal school, five others out of town academies, though I was not one of the favored ones. There are no doors secure against disease, the feebleness of old age and death. Sometimes it seems as though health and disease, success and failure, pleasure and pain were scattered about very much at random. There are few families that escape without having a certain amount of tragedy, and this family was not one of them. My mother taught her little ones to say their prayers and my father corrected them in such ways as he thought beneficial. They were law-abiding, church-going members of the community, desirous of doing their full duty to God and man and of training their children to follow in their footsteps. They were so fully preoccupied with present and prospective duties, they were themselves so poorly equipped in intellectual development, that what they could do for their children was limited. They were sent to school, to church and to Sunday-school.

The Hunt house was situated at some little distance above and back from the road. The lawn sloped from the house to the road and was shaded by a large old ash tree and a smaller elm. The house was built after a style often seen in those days—long, two stories high, one room deep with a large chimney in the middle and a lean-to addition on the back side, covered with a long sloping roof.

As you entered the front door, which was in the middle of the long side facing the road, you found yourself in a narrow entrance seven by three and one half feet. This entrance had a door at each end opening into rooms about sixteen feet square, and in addition provided a way to the stairway to the second story. The room to the right was occupied, in my early days, by my grandfather and grandmother.[32] Later, it was occupied as a parlor. The room to the left served the family as kitchen, dining room, living room, and parlor. In addition to those two large rooms in the main and original house, there were several smaller rooms in the ell behind: a chamber, a kitchen, a milk room, and a storage room. In the second story, to the front and right, was a chamber corresponding in size to the room below. On the left, the other side of the chimney, were two narrow chambers corresponding to the large room below and in the ell two unfinished chambers. The house thus contained two large rooms and three smaller ones below and one large room and four smaller ones above, with an attic.

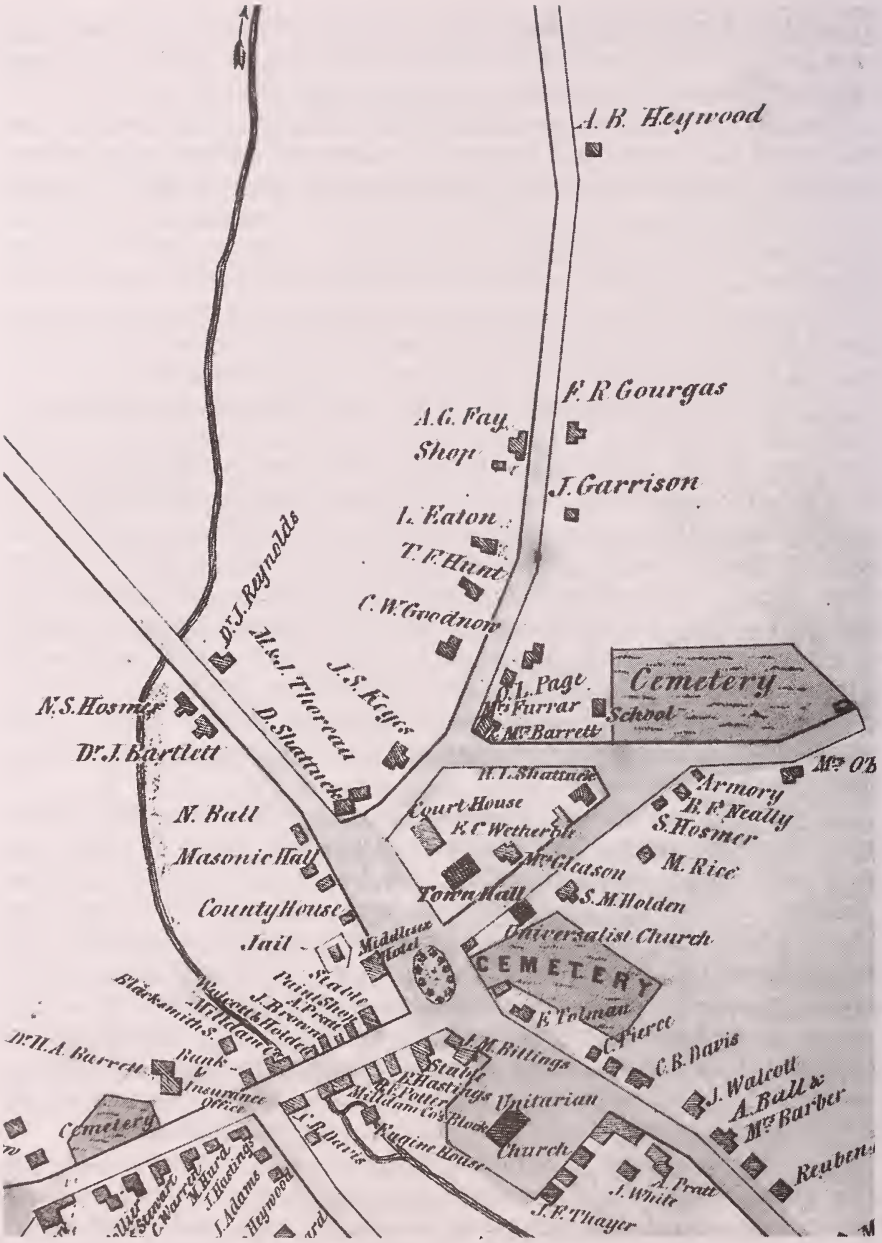
Each of the large rooms had an open fireplace and a projecting beam in the ceiling, which was low. Until the year 1850 or near it, there had never been a stove in the house.[33] The three large rooms with their open fireplaces provided for the heat and for most of the cooking. The small chambers had no heat of their own. All the cooking was done at the fireplaces with the assistance of a tin kitchen[34] and a large brick oven. From the time the cookstove was introduced, it was used to some extent in cooking. A little later, the large front room, to the east, was available as a parlor and was provided with an airtight stove. As long as the family remained in the house, there was never a stove in the living room.

In that style of house, the chimney was made very large in the lower story in order to accommodate as many rooms as possible, and as it ascends it is drawn in and made smaller. That chimney was seven by ten feet on the ground and had no cellar under it. There was no cellar under the living room. As the soil about the house was of a clay, retentive of moisture, in the spring of the year water often ran through the cellar, and a drain was provided to carry it outside. In the living room, the coals in the fireplace were carefully covered with ashes at night and sufficient supply was found in the morning to start the fire, so that the fire was seldom extinguished. As an open fire, when kept continually going, requires a great amount of fuel, a large part of the winter's leisure was required to keep up a good supply of wood.[35] In moderate winter weather, the room would be fairly comfortable, but in very cold weather the fireplace was doubly attractive with a rousing fire.

To one today, living in a well-built house with all the modern conveniences, it is difficult to realize the entire absence of all such things in most farmers' houses of seventy years ago. Conditions differed to a certain extent in different localities, and in the same neighborhood varied a little with the prosperity of the farmer, but at that time most of present-day conveniences did not exist. There was no bathroom on our street unless it were near the village. There was no water supply, no sewerage system.[36] Each owner supplied himself with water as best he could and took care of his own sewage, or let it take care of itself. If the word hygiene and what it represents existed in that day, it never disturbed the equanimity of any farmer. If Boards of Health were in being, they ignored the farmer. Health was something that took care of itself. If it failed, the doctor was at hand, and if he failed—and he was fallible—there was the ground ever ready to receive him and give him a final release from all his tribulations.

Of what happened in the old home before my day I know little, and the impressions of my early childhood are faint. My recollections of the family, the house, and what happened there extend from the year 1845 to 1859, and those impressions are fairly distinct. After so many years, in memory I revisit the scenes of my childhood. I enter the old familiar street. How real the houses all are! The Shattuck house; the Thoreau house,[37] where I as a boy once sold berries and for some reason never got my pay; the Court House,[38] which I afterwards saw burning from the hill; the Emeline Barrett house[39]—how genial she was with her house full of boarders. How well I remember the night I watched with her nephew, Nathan, a short time before his death. She was so anxious about him that she could hardly leave us alone, but came in from time to time to see that all was well.

The Keyes house,[40] which I remember was moved from the opposite side of the street; the Goodnow place,[41] where school was kept at one time; my Uncle Hunt's house,[42] where I often visit; and the Eaton house[43] just beyond. Dr. Edwards,[44] who relieved us of our troublesome teeth, and John Garrison's little house on the little hill;[45] the Gourgas house,[46] with the portraits of his French ancestors (and was not he the first to have a bathroom on our street?), and opposite the shop where they made pencils; next the Fay cottage,[47] and opposite Mr. Heywood,[48] whose son served in our company. Prescott, who kept a lumberyard, served in the war, became



Monument Square and Monument Street (lower section), from 1852 Walling map of Concord (enlarged)

Courtesy Concord Free Public Library

Colonel, and was killed.[49] Next the widow Jones,[50] whose son was so particular about his clothes. I remember one Sunday, as we were approaching the church, he took out his pocket handkerchief and very carefully dusted his boots that the shine on them might be immaculate as he entered—a trifling event to hold in memory when so many important events have left no trace.

The house where I went, a small boy, with an elder brother to deliver hay, and Mr. Ripley[51] gave me a cent, yes, and that cent has paid good dividends, better probably than the giver ever expected—something that it is worthwhile to remember. Mr. Simmonds[52] [sic] and the front wall he built. I used to wonder when I saw him at work on it, what impression such work made on him. "Six Sermons," which I read long ago and which, I doubt not, ably set forth his views, left no permanent impressions, while his connection with that wall left an imprint not to be effaced. The result of a mind absorbed in practical questions.

And here is the river busy as ever, doing in its quiet way its part of the world's work, with its unruffled temper. My uncle Flint,[53] where I go so often to play. Mr. Monroe in his little cottage who made my boots.[54] And Mrs. Monroe who once, in describing the visit of a bright boy, said, "he kerxamined me and he kerxamined Mr. Monroe and he was the kerxaminest child I ever saw." General Buttrick, who lives in the house built by my uncle Wright,[55] who ruined himself by the undertaking and died leaving my aunt with a large family and limited means. Mr. Pratt from Brook Farm with his three sons and one daughter.[56] How I tramped the woods and fields with him and his son Theodore in search of flowers. Miss Ripley, with her newly-built boarding school.[57] When I first saw her, I thought she was homely. But when I knew her well and saw her often, as I did later, my impressions of her changed completely, for she was courageous, energetic, genial, and painstaking, and her countenance—especially when it was lighted up with a smile—became attractive to me. In walking, she stood erect and she was sometimes called "her Perpendicular Majesty."[58] Mr. Channing,[59] who was something of a puzzle to us practically-minded farmer boys. One of my chums told me of being over there when Mr. Channing was hoeing in his vegetable garden, and the boy, observing that he carefully preserved a large weed, asked him why he did not cut it down. He replied that "the weed had the same right to grow as the corn."

And here at last is the dear old house where as a child I grew up and developed, pondered, dreamed, and wondered of the great world I had stepped into and of which I was so ignorant. Yes, and every feature of it is unchanged. It is I alone that have changed. Is it possible that I and that boy, who ran about for the pure delight in action, are one and the same person? Now I move but slowly and with caution. My breath is short and must be economized. Yes, we are the same, though my impressions are so fixed and I am so changed. Those impressions are mine, they can belong to no other. Then I was a boy full of vigor, with the world before me, and dreaming of what it might be; now I am an old man having seen something of the world, am leaving it behind me and dreaming only of the past. And I am content. It is the way of the world, and it is well that it is so.

Monument Street and "River Road to Carlisle" (upper section of Monument Street), from 1852 Walling map of Concord

Courtesy Concord Free Public Library

I start up the slope that leads to the door, not on the run, as I used to do, but with measured, uncertain steps. My uncle's ambitious white house, with its green blinds and dressed stone steps, still projects in front of and above the old house, and the two spruce trees are still there. The lawn in front of the old house is as green as ever, with its dandelions and buttercups. And there is the large flat stone, level with the surface, where I used to stretch at full length,[60] when I could hear the rumblings of distant wagons, which I could not hear standing erect on the ground. I wonder if I should stretch at full length on it now, I should have the same experience. But I will not stop to try. The large old ash tree is not wanting, nor is the smaller and younger elm. Even the exit to the drain which allowed water to flow from the cellar is still there. The large uncut flag before the front door—worn smooth but not seen by the feet of so many generations of my ancestors and also by the feet of every stranger who entered that door—is still in place.

I tread again the well worn flag, but as I am about to raise the well thumbed latch a voice cries out, "Halt! Old man! What seek you here? You are a sleep walker, a dreamer. There is nothing here. Once upon a time a house stood here. But that was in the old time. It is gone. Not a vestige of it remains, and if you seek that family, your father, your mother, your brothers and sisters, they took their departure long ago. You yourself are only a waif left stranded by the river of time. If you seek them, go where they are, do not come here where they are not." "Yes! I know that I am a waif, in some way left stranded from another world. But I am not dreaming. I am wide awake. This soil is dear to me. I cannot tread it with indifference. To me it is alive, as is that house, of which you say not a vestige remains. To me it is the same, with not a feature wanting in it or the surroundings." But why do I argue? The house is intact. It is only that voice which has no existence except in my imagination. My mind must have wandered for the time being, that I should have mistaken a breath of wind for a human voice. Time is limited. I must not loiter.

As the house is raised but a little above the ground, one step brings me into the narrow entrance, and one more step to the left to the door of the living room, which I enter. This is the room where so many of my early impressions were received, so much family history enacted, and everything is unchanged. The door by which I enter is close to the front, south wall. Next [to] that door and as close to it as possible, on the east side, is another door leading to the cellar, and next comes the chimney which extends the whole of the remaining length of that side. First in the chimney comes the open fireplace with its iron mantelpiece, with projecting flaring sides and flat top, which was always warm. This framework was bolted strongly together and to it was fastened the crane which sustained the pots and kettles. Next in line comes the large brick oven which seldom failed to produce its weekly varied quota of toothsome viands. Below the oven was a large ash chamber. Next in line came a large set boiler with its fireplace and flue.[61] In front of this whole length of chimney was a brick floor ten by two and one half feet. In the adjoining back room was another set boiler. Thus, in addition to the

Old Hunt houses, Punkatasset
(photograph by Alfred Munroe)
Courtesy Concord Free Public Library

open fireplace with its tin kitchen, and pots and kettles, there was an oven and two large boilers to help in the cooking.

On the back, north wall next [to] the chimney was the door leading to the kitchen, and next in line on that wall a blank space where stood a table. In the middle of that wall was a door opening into a chamber, and next a bare space where hung the eight day clock,[62] which supplied the family with time, and below a small square table. At the end of that wall was a window giving a view of the hill. The adjoining house was close to the western wall so that there were no windows on that side, but the whole side was taken up with closets and sets of drawers. The south side had its two windows, with a looking glass between and a table below. Where the walls were bare, there was a plain wooden wainscoting three feet high, and—above—plastering covered with paper. Tables, rockers, and such other chairs as were needed completed the furniture. The floors, where not of brick, was [were] covered with wide, long boards with mats, but no carpet covered the whole floor in early days.

Most of the food was prepared in this room. All the meals were eaten there. Breakfast between six and seven, dinner at twelve, supper at six, and meals generally on time. The dinner table was of maple, square with folding leaves, and was always placed in the center of the room before the open fire, my mother sitting with her back to it and her family about her. As a rule, the cooking and such work was finished in the forenoon and if visitors called for any purpose they took the situation as they found it. Afternoons and evenings the room was usually in condition to receive visitors, when the work—if there were any—was likely to be something connected with needles. This room was the foyer, the gathering place of the family when not otherwise engaged. The male members were naturally mostly absent through the day and the females were elsewhere occupied much of the time.

It was in the evening that the family gathered, and then, especially through the long winter evenings, when neighbors frequently called and there was a bright blazing fire. Then the sober old room put on its holiday aspect, was lighted up with oil lamps, the blaze, the cheerful faces, and the lively conversation. On such occasions a circle formed itself about the fire, enlarged at any time to accommodate newcomers, when each countenance was lighted up by the firelight, by content, and by enjoyment. Of all the impressions received by my slowly unfolding mind in my childhood surroundings, there are none more firmly imprinted, clearly cut, or more free from all sorrowful suggestions.

At that time tasks were done. If there were trials and sorrows, they were temporarily laid aside. If there were quarrels, by general consent it was agreed that here was not the place to ventilate them. The farmers, like members of other occupations, belonged to different political parties and they might have clashing ideas on various subjects. If there were any neighborhood quarrels, at that time I knew nothing about them. Papers, magazines, books were not plenty in those days, and as a rule farmers and their families had little knowledge or interest in artistic, scientific, or historic subjects. Distractions were not so numerous nor so enticing. News was not flashing through the air[63]—it penetrated slowly to the

farm. Farmer folk liked to meet and discuss what news there was, to compare notes and exchange gossip. There was, in those days, a live [lively] neighborly feeling. Calls were made more from the social instinct than for ceremony, and were more prolonged.

While those gatherings and discussions are so firmly fixed in my memory, I could but little account of the subjects discussed. One thing I have a faint recollection of. An older sister used at times to recite pieces of poetry to the family and such visitors as might happen to be present. I remember several such occasions, but of the pieces all I could remember was "cattle and mouldy corn." Later, when I came to read the "Bigelow Papers" [The Biglow Papers], I recognized where the cattle and mouldy corn were taken from. "'Taint a knowin' kind o'cattle Thet is ketched with mouldy corn";[64] &c.

My father, as far back as I can recollect, was a strong and consistent antislavery supporter and always ready to maintain his opinions, so that it was natural that his daughter should repeat lines from an antislavery poem. He was a subscriber to the Washington Era, an antislavery paper, and a careful reader of it. I remember that the walls of one of the unfinished back rooms was [were] papered over with copies of that paper, and as I slept in that room at one time, that paper made a great impression on me. Uncle Tom's Cabin first appeared in that paper and made a tremendous sensation as it came out. Antislavery people were thrilled by the work, but some Democrats would not read it on any consideration. In those days antislavery sentiments were not popular. I do not know in what way my father first became interested in the cause. My impression is that he was the first farmer in the neighborhood to become interested in it. My half sister Clarissa Cutter lived in Judge Hoar's family, and it may have been that the influence came from that direction. As a boy later I used weekly to deliver the family butter to customers in the village. These customers were Judge Hoar,[65] Mr. Bigelow,[66] Mrs. Nathan Brooks,[67] Dr. Bartlett[68]—all interested in the cause. Mr. Bigelow assisted the slave Shadrac [sic] in his escape north, at great personal risk to himself.

For a time it was hoped that the Clay Compromise of 1850[69] would quiet the discussion on the slavery question, but the Slave Power was of such a nature that no lasting compromise could be made with it. The nature of that power was such that it must rule or ruin, and no sooner had the compromise been made than the old struggle recommenced with ever increased virulence, to end in inevitable clash. The struggle, which it was hoped was dead and buried, would not stay dead and buried. It persisted in coming to life and in invading localities where it was not wanted. No power could keep it down; no locality could exclude it. It destroyed political parties, it divided the churches, it divided the North into two parties—one party that would grant all demands to keep the peace, the other party who would oppose, in all legal ways, the encroachments of that power.[70] The party for peace was at first everywhere in a great majority, but as the struggle went on and outrages increased, that majority gradually shifted over to the other party.

The troublesome question invaded our peaceful neighborhood and caused more division than anything that had arisen before. While there was never anything of a violent nature, I can remember many warm discussions. Sometimes even by

the fireside the subject could not be kept out altogether. My father was more given to reading than the average farmer and I have no doubt that on that subject he was better informed than most of them. While he was not aggressive, I am sure he was always ready to defend his opinions, and I have no doubt that he was able to maintain his side of an argument fairly well.

Our neighborhood, originally strictly agricultural, was gradually invaded by outsiders who were not. First came Mr. Pratt, who had been a printer, then farmer at Brook Farm, then to Concord on a farm of his own. He was intelligent, a great lover of nature, and a practical botanist. Next came Mr. Channing, to be succeeded later by Mr. Robbins, a Unitarian Minister, intelligent and witty. Next came Miss Ripley, with her boarding school and scholars from different parts of the country. Mr. Willis[71] was a later comer. In addition, boarders were kept by my cousins for many years. The successive new arrivals made great changes in our neighborhood, and from being an exclusive farmer folk it became a mixed people where new customs and habits of thoughts, new ideas and a more extended knowledge of the world and its ways came in contact with old ideas and customs, and modified them to some extent.

The natives, their families with their individual peculiarities, are fairly well recorded in the book of my memory, as are the newcomers who remained any length of time, or with whom I came in contact. [For] any of those whose stay was short, or with whom I did not come in contact, the record is indistinct. Many of the new arrivals were frequent callers, and joined in the fireside gatherings, adding new life and interest. Beside those accidental gatherings around the fireside, there were others for various purposes. Frequently there were parties of young people for the purpose of playing games and paying forfeits. Occasionally there would be parties of females, called quilting parties, when the quilting frames would be produced from their hiding place in the attic, set up in the middle of the room, when the materials for a quilt would be fixed to the frames, which were so arranged with pegs and holes to put them in that as the work progressed the quilt could be rolled up for convenience in working. Those parties and the entertainments following gave opportunity for social intercourse.

While this room served for all purposes except for a chamber, it was seldom vacant except at night. When the other front room was available and used as a parlor, and when a cookstove was brought into the back kitchen and used, the living room, although it kept its open fire blazing, held no longer its former exclusive importance.

There was always an abundance of plain, simple food on my mother's table. For bread, the main reliance was on brown bread made of Indian & rye meal, grown on the farm, of the best quality, fresh and sweet. A week's supply was baked in the brick oven on Saturday. As the meal was just as it came from the mill, the first process was to sift out the coarser parts. The meals were mixed in the proper proportions in a large bread trough three feet long, with flaring sides and holes cut in the two ends for convenience in carrying about. In this trough, the dough was kneaded, a laborious process, until it was of an even texture throughout, and left to rise over night. In the morning, it was made up into six or more large

loaves, seven inches across and five high with rounded tops. When the fire in the oven was extinguished, the ashes [were] carefully swept out, and those loaves, by means of a long-handled wooden shovel, placed close together in the back end of the oven, on the bare brick. The heat of the oven was so even and lasting that the loaves, pressed close together, were thoroughly cooked throughout and never burned, and they had on their outer surface a thick crust of which I was very fond. After a few days, this bread would be toasted before the fire. This bread was wholesome, nutritious, certainly not luxurious. There was also a moderate provision of white bread baked at the same time.

In addition to the breads, quite a variety of simple cakes were made. One such was made of corn meal with egg and milk, cooked in the tin kitchen or in the stove. They were delicious. Rich cake was made for special occasions. Hasty pudding, so called, was often made with either rye or corn meals, served with milk or molasses. In the cold season, hulled corn was often prepared. It was a long and laborious process to prepare it, and when it was done a large quantity was prepared, and the neighbors benefited. Whole corn was boiled in a large kettle until it was swollen. It was then taken out and put into lye, then rubbed until the hulls came off, and then again boiled until the lye taste was removed and the corn soft. That made a dish that anyone could relish.

The oven was capacious and it was always filled. A pot of baked beans and a pot of Indian pudding were never lacking. Usually there was a roast of some kind of meat, and pies were placed near the entrance where they could be watched and removed. Everything cooked in the oven was thoroughly cooked and had a fine flavor.

Apples, peaches, and cranberries were grown on the farm for sale, and other fruits to a limited extent, so that fruit, fresh or preserved in some form, was seldom wanting. Apples, peaches, and sometimes berries were dried in the sun, a process that required careful watching and sometimes, in bad weather, the help of the stove. Quartered apples were strung on strings or dried on frames. When sweet cider was made in the fall, a cask of cider applesauce was made for winter use. Sweet cider was boiled in a large kettle until it took on a rich dark color, then the prepared apple was boiled with it until the whole mass took on that color. Thus prepared, it would keep all winter and made a great addition to winter meals.

Vegetables common in those days were grown on the farm, but there were [are] some common today that were seldom or never seen on farmers' tables in those days. Asparagus, celery, and tomato were not grown in my early days.[72] I remember when the tomato first came to us. We had to learn to like it, and some of the old people never did learn. For early greens, dandelions were abundant, and even the young shoots of the nettle were used. My father used to save the stumps of the cabbages after the heads had been cut off and set them out in early spring, when they would send out an abundance of tender shoots used for greens.

For meats and their substitutes, the farm produced milk, butter, eggs, poultry, pork. In winter no butcher's cart found its way to the farm, but in summer it came once a week and was patronized. In those days, it was the custom for farmers to kill their porkers from time to time through the winter and when they

did so exchange fresh pork with each other, thus lengthening the season. It thus happened that the farmer's meat ration in winter consisted largely of pork and its many varied products. The ribs and lean parts were eaten fresh, the fat parts salted, hams and shoulders pickled or smoked, while the trimmings were made up into sausages, the feet cut up into short lengths and made into souse. This last was made by boiling the parts, then pickling them in vinegar. To my taste, this was a great delicacy.

The process of sausage filling was an interesting one. It was accomplished by a simple primitive implement made of tin and wood. It consisted of a tin cylinder, eight by four inches, open on one end and on the other end a tunnel was soldered reducing the diameter of the tube at the end of the tunnel to less than two inches. A wooden pestle made to fit the inside of the tin cylinder, and a little longer, completed the implement. When preparing to operate, the cylinder was filled not quite full of the minced meat. The skins—carefully prepared, scraped, and washed—were drawn over the end of the tunnel, the pestle introduced into the open end of the cylinder, and pressure applied. A helper was necessary to see that the skin and the minced meat were fed in proper proportion. The sausages thus prepared were hung up in a cool place and in cold weather would keep for some time.

There was through the week a day for baked beans, a day for a boiled dinner with vegetables, and a day for a roast of some kind with such additions as were necessary. The criticism was made by some of the newcomers, of the family cooking, that the frying pan was too much in request. The criticism was a fair one. Some of the cooking was not conducted according to hygiene rules. The cooking was old style farmer cooking. A large share—most—of the food was well cooked, palatable, nutritious, wholesome. There was at times an excess of pork and its products on the table, and the frying pan was used more than it would be today. While the fireplace was used mostly for cooking, the gridiron[73] held its place with the frying pan, but it required care and patience to use it before the open fire. A liberal provision of live coals must be on hand. The coals were drawn a little forward, and the gridiron with its slices of meat placed over the coals. The gridiron had legs a little over three inches high, so that the bars were at a proper height above the coals. These bars were shallow troughs conducting to a larger trough at the end to save at least some of the juice. The gridiron was used for other purposes as toasting bread (though there was a special implement for toasting). After the cookstove was introduced, no doubt the frying pan to a certain extent took the place of the gridiron for the reason that the latter required time and patience to use.

In those days, the great variety of cereals and prepared foods did not exist. It is to be remembered that the last three quarters of a century has brought such tremendous changes in ways of thinking and doing, in all departments of human thought and activity, that one knowing only the present day would—must—find great difficulty in forming a picture of that world so near and at the same time so distant. There had been inventions and changes before that time and yet that time saw the end of an old and the commencement of a new era. Life in the old era had been simple in the extreme. Life in the new era was to become complex,

many-sided. New inventions stimulating others were to revolutionize everything connected with man and his activities. The opening up of the great West with its unlimited stretch of fertile soil, the need of machines to take the place of the men at the front to cultivate the soil, tremendously accelerated the movement already on the way. When I was young, the muscle of men and animals supplied most of the motive power. The tools I and others used were primitive tools. The plows, scythes, shovels, forks, and hoes had all been greatly improved since the days of old, but there was no new principle in them. The flail I used so laboriously could not have been much of an improvement over the one used by Adam after his expulsion from the Garden. No labor-saving machines were to be found in the house, no buttons to push to set some activity in motion, no telephone calls, no lecture or concert coming through the air to entertain the family in the house, no new principle in conducting the household affairs.

In our house, there was no water until a late day.[74] If my father had enjoyed rugged health, which he did not, if he had been a progressive farmer, which he was not, there would have been more comforts in the house, and ready cash would have been more abundant. With his limitations and the conditions under which he worked, he did the best he could for his family. My mother did not make the conditions under which she worked. All she could do was to make the best of those conditions, and strict economy on her part was a necessity. In addition to the housekeeping and the family sewing, butter was made in the summer season after the old style. There was a milk room with broad shelves all around, on which were bright tin pans filled with milk set to rise, to be skimmed when ready; cream to be removed at the right time; churning, working the butter, forming it into pound lumps; carefully washing all implements and drying them in the sun. Nearly every day a row of tin pans could be seen drying on benches in the sun. All those labors pressing to be done at the right time and in the right way. My mother prided herself on the quality of her butter and spared no pains to keep up that quality.[75]

Soap was made every year for home use. In place of matches, paper tapers were made. Those were made by rolling a strip of paper on itself, so as to be five inches long with an end left loose so as to take fire quickly. A liberal supply was always kept on hand on the mantelpiece.

Thanksgiving was the great day of the year in that household. Christmas was hardly noticed.[76] As the season approached, the house must be put in the best order, the walls cleaned, tins and dishes scoured, pies, cakes, and an extra supply of food prepared. A large supply of mincemeat was made and stored in jars for winter use to be made up into pies as needed.

My mother was skillful with her needle, and with her rapidly growing family that skill was in constant requisition. As far as I can remember, when I was small all my clothes were made at home. That was no doubt true of the other children, so that with the other sewing there must have been a great amount altogether. No one person could have done it all, and the older girls helped and outside aid was called as needed. Woolen socks were made for the family. The knitting kit with its accompanying ball of yarn was always at hand. One or more

females plying the knitting needles makes one of the unforgettable household pictures of my childhood.

For boots and shoes, we went to Mr. Monroe, who lived half a mile down the street. In summer, farmers' boys as a rule went barefoot, and in District No. 7 boys went to school barefoot. When the shoes are first removed, the feet are tender, but they soon become hardened to meet the new conditions, and then the shoeless boy enjoys a freedom unknown to the boy who retains his shoes. As a boy, I had pantaloons full length but made after the old style. I went to the taylor when I was thirteen years old and after that my clothes came from outside. The dress of children in those days in the country was simple and inexpensive. No starched collars or cuffs for ordinary wear. There was something extra for occasions. For those working on the farm in warm weather, clothing was simple in the extreme, consisting often of pantaloons, shirt, and hat.

Schools: Soon after the country was settled, a system of public schools was established, and with the passage of time it had developed into what was known as the district school system. Under that system the town was divided into districts and each district was, to a limited extent, autonomous.[77] The town school money was each year divided after a certain plan, fixing the proportion of each district and allowing them to spend their share of the school funds. Each outer district was represented by one member on the Committee, whose duty it was to act as the agent of the district in spending their share of the funds. As the outer districts were largely made up of farmers, he was generally a farmer. It was he who hired the teacher, provided for all necessities, such as fuel, care and such other needs as might arise. The Center District had three representatives on the Committee and they were expected to examine the teachers and pass on their qualifications, and to examine the schools at the end of each term. Part of their duties might be performed by a Superintendent, when there was one.

There were seven districts in the town. The Center District contained a large share of the wealth and pupils of the town. In it were three primary, an intermediate, and a high school, and its share of the school funds was 51 percent. Of the six outer districts, each had a share ranging from seven to ten percent. District No. 7 was entitled to seven and one eighth percent. This percentage basis was established by the town in 1849. In 1852, District No. 7 contained twenty-two families. The school house was built of brick on a little elevation, two and one quarter miles from the village and a little less than a mile from our house. I probably first attended in 1845, and I remember very well as a small boy walking back and forth with other children. I also remember a little later, in winter, when there was a snow storm, my father with his ox sled took us all to school, with blankets on the stakes to keep us warm. As it was no one's duty to carry children to school, he must have acted as a volunteer.

In those days, farmers' boys were generally taken out of school in the summer season at an early age to help in farm work. Some of these boys would be allowed to attend the winter term until they were men grown. The result was that

District School No. 7 (North Quarter),
now part of house at 1234 Monument Street
(*Concord Journal* photograph, 28 February 1963)
Courtesy Concord Journal

in winter there was a large school containing a few overgrown boys. In the first years of my attendance, there was always a male teacher for the winter term and a female teacher for the rest of the year. At a later period, a female teacher was employed the whole year. The first week or two of the winter term, when a male teacher was employed, was always a trying time, for the large boys were not inclined to submit to the authority of the teacher without testing his ability to control them. I remember distinctly one occasion when there was a contest for the mastery between a teacher and a large boy before the pupils. I could not give the name of that teacher, but the boy's name was David Henry Buttrick. After a contest, the teacher obtained the victory and the boy stretched his length on the floor, and boy and school recognized that they had a master. It was not often that matters were carried to that length. Another winter a teacher, after vainly striving for a term to maintain order, was forced to leave and was succeeded by another teacher. Those overgrown boys could not have profited much from their attendance. At a later period they did not attend. Through the summer, the school was small, the pupils young, and there was no question of government.

Heat was provided for by a box-shaped woodstove twenty inches square and nearly three feet long, held together by iron bolts. The wood was kept outside in a shed. When water was wanted for any purpose it was brought from the nearest house. There was no means of ventilation except by the windows. There was in the ceiling an open space covered with a wooden shutter, which could be opened by means of a long pole with a sharp iron in the end, which was sometimes opened, but as the loft above had no outlet to the air it could have afforded little relief.

The games played at that school were simple and primitive. In summer, the children were small, in the winter the small boys did not play with the large ones. They had ball and bat and used them to some extent, but had not the modern games. One rough game was played with a wooden wheel fourteen inches in diameter. The boys would be divided into two equal sides and each stationed at the proper distance apart in the road. Then the boy who was most competent would send the wheel with all the force he could muster toward the other party. If the other side could stop the wheel, they maintained their ground. If they could not stop it they must retreat to where the wheel dropped. When snow was about, the two sides would have a battle with snowballs.

There was no playground. The small hill on which the house stood was too small for that purpose. The road was not used in that day as it is today and served fairly well for that purpose. The small children used to play in their way—running, leaping, tag and "I spy," and such games. We used also to amuse ourselves, at noon when the teacher was away, by running as fast as we could over the tops of the desks. Perhaps I remember those runs for the reason that on one such run I gave my tongue a severe cut between my teeth and I had good reason to remember it.

Those desks were made of some soft wood, unpainted, and had seats of board the same length as the desks, and [were] so made that the front of one desk made the back of the desk in front of it. Those desks were ornamented with the handiwork of several generations of boys and showed their proficiency in the use of jackknives. There was one boy, John Barrett, who for some reason was made a butt of by the larger boys. He, in common with all pupils living near, went home for his dinner. One day when he was thus absent, those boys occupied the time filling the seat and back of his desk with pins, their heads sunk into the soft wood and points sticking out in such a way that he could not have sat down without serious results ensuing. Probably some friendly pupil gave him an idea of what was in store for him, for no such results followed. In 1857, the house was thoroughly renovated at an expense of thirteen hundred dollars and the dilapidated desks replaced by modern ones.[78]

Disorder in the school was not the rule but the exception, and the teachers, as a rule, were no doubt as well prepared for their work as the average teacher of district schools of that time. I remember one male teacher who brought a microscope and took great pains with the older pupils to get them interested in it and what it revealed. One winter the older pupils, with the assistance and under the direction of the teacher, prepared and gave a play in the schoolroom. The name of the play was Box and Cox, and that is all I remember about it.

Under the district school system, pupils who were sufficiently prepared could attend the high school. No provision was, however, made for transportation. The large boys who at one time made the commencement of the winter term a trying time for the teacher should have been in a high school. They, however, cared little for an education and could not have passed a satisfactory examination. Some of the pupils who were prepared and who lived nearest the village did attend. So far as I know, there were none who lived beyond the Nathan Barrett house who did attend.[79]

In my younger days, the schoolhouse in winter was well filled. A little later, the number of children in the district decreased and the number of pupils both summer and winter declined from year to year. It was in this district that the question first arose as to what should be done when the pupils in a district diminished toward the vanishing point. This occurred in the winter of 1865-6. In their report for that year, the Committee say "that the number of children, belonging to the district who wished to attend its school was two," and the school was closed. In the report of 1867, the Superintendent says, "the school in District No. 7 was discontinued through the summer and autumn because the number of scholars had become so small. The school was reestablished during the winter term. It was made up of six scholars from the center of the town, one from Carlisle, and six from the district, two of whom are large boys who could have attended the Intermediate School without serious difficulty." In the town report for that year, under "Payments [i.e. Expenditures], Support of Schools," item District No. 7, for

transporting children, twenty dollars.[80] This is the first payment made by the town for the transportation of children. It was not until the year 1869 that the legislature passed a law authorizing towns to raise money by taxation for transportation of children.

The school was open in 1868, closed in 1869-70, then opened again for a time. In 1879, it was open for the last time. For fourteen years, the question had been agitating the parents of the district, the School Committee, the town. In the meantime, the same cause had been working, the same question arose and passed for settlement in the other farm districts, and in twenty-two years parents, School Committee, and town were so thoroughly convinced of the advantages of the new system over the old that it was carried through to successful completion.[81] In 1880, the Emerson School house was built; in 1887 a four-room schoolhouse was built at West Concord; in 1889 a new high school house was built, thus housing all the scholars in two centers.

The old district school system had done good work in its day. It was no doubt the best system possible in its time, but its defects were great and the new system in every way far preferable. In the report of the School Committee for the year 1892, Appendix F, Superintendent Eaton has given a history of the movement and has set forth the advantages of it over the old. Anyone interested in the subject will find it very instructive.

The mental training of the youth, certainly one of the most vital questions with which the community has to deal, has had its share in the forward movement, evident in so many departments of human activity in the last seventy five years.[82]

Notes

[1] The French/Hunt correspondence and working papers for French's Social Circle memoir are located in the Allen French Papers, Minute Man National Historical Park Archives (Box 6, Folders 10-13). These papers include a letter from Mary R. Jacob's (Hunt's niece) to Allen French, 7 November 1926, and her manuscript responses about her uncle on a printed Social Circle biographical form. Thanks to Dr. Teresa Wallace, Curator of the MMNHP Archives, for providing access to and granting permission to quote from this material.

[2] *Reminiscences of the Old Hunt House on Monument Street, Concord, Mass., and of Life in Concord in the Mid-19th Century.* Another version of the manuscript—evidently an earlier draft from which the copy sent to French was made—is found at the Concord Museum. The Concord Free Public Library apparently obtained Hunt's finished manuscript from Allen French or his heirs, while the Concord Museum acquired its version in 1981 from Roger W. Robbins, whose father was a Belmont neighbor of William Henry Hunt's brother Charles. Charles Hunt was married to a Robbins, through which connection Roger Robbins inherited Hunt family papers and artifacts. Thanks to Curator David Wood of the Concord Museum for allowing me to examine the Concord Museum's draft Hunt manuscript, to see the documentation relating to its acquisition (including Robbins's letter of donation to the Concord Antiquarian Society—now the Concord Museum—and a typed Hunt biographical/genealogical sheet by him), and to compare the manuscript with the edited copy that Allen French used. The transcript of Hunt's reminiscences here presented has been prepared from the final version in the CFPL.

[3] There is some discrepancy regarding his date of birth, which is not recorded in the Concord vital records. Most sources consulted give the year of his birth as 1839, but his gravestone and Sleepy Hollow Cemetery records (provided by Patricia Hopkins of Concord's Cemetery Department) give the year as 1837. Nevertheless, the year of his birth was almost surely 1839. The listings of his age in his Concord marriage record and in federal censuses support 1839 as the correct year. Another discrepancy exists in the fact that obituary clippings in the CFPL's Obituary Scrapbook Volume 2 (96, 101) give his date of birth as 2 June rather than 21 June, the date that shows up in all other sources.

[4] The old Hunt house on Punkatasset is not to be confused with the Humphrey Hunt house that formerly stood near the present Hunt-Hosmer house (now 320 Lowell Road). The Humphrey Hunt house fascinated Thoreau, who described its dismantling in detail in March, 1859 journal entries. Information on the Hunt property and houses on Punkatasset is found in: Wheeler, *North Bridge Neighbors*; Wheeler House File Mo 14; Keyes; and Jarvis.

[5] Material in the Allen French Papers in the MMNHP Archives reflects Allen French's and Percy Brown's attempts to establish the accuracy of this piece of family history. In her *North Bridge Neighbors*, Ruth Wheeler also explores the claim, citing the transmission of the story in "widely separated branches of the Hunt family" as evidence of its truth (154).

[6] The births of only some of the Hunt children are listed in the Concord vital records. William Henry Hunt states in his reminiscences that his mother bore thirteen children. Using Concord vital records, T.B. Wyman's *Genealogy of the Name and Family of Hunt*, and Hunt genealogical materials in the CFPL compiled by Barbara Warner of San Juan Capistrano, California, I have been able to identify only twelve—two from her first marriage, ten from her second. The Concord Museum files contain genealogical and biographical information compiled by Roger W. Robbins, who states that Hunt's siblings included three half sisters. Assuming that William Henry Hunt was correct about the number of children his mother had, it may be that Clarissa and Saunders Cutter had another child in addition to Clarissa and Otis. It is also possible that Clarissa and Daniel Hunt had an eleventh, unrecorded child who did not live long after birth.

[7] Years of birth for Hunt children not recorded in the Concord vital records are supplied from Barbara Warner's genealogical chart of Daniel Hunt's family in the CFPL files. Warner gives the second Charles Francis's date of birth as 26 February 1837, that of Ellen Maria as 16 September 1837. Given the fact that two live births less than seven months apart would have been extremely unlikely, if not impossible, it appears that one of these dates is incorrect.

[8] In "Culture and Cultivation: Agriculture and Society in Thoreau's Concord," Robert A. Gross discusses the intensification of farm work in the first half of the nineteenth century, when the farmer increasingly produced separate crops for home use and for market. Gross writes of the simultaneous decline in importance of rye as a crop between 1800 and 1840 and of its continued cultivation for the farmer's personal use in this period, and also of the practice of growing English hay for market while using meadow hay for farm livestock.

[9] Russell 198-200; Gross 52.

[10] Concord assessors' records indicate that William Henry Hunt owned one cow in 1866, eight in 1868, seventeen in 1874, twenty-two in 1884, twenty-four in 1890, twenty-seven in 1895. (The numbers do not present a straight upward progression—there are some decreases in the years intervening between those here noted.) For information on the development of dairy farming in New England and in Concord, see Russell 261-263; Kimenker 168-169; and Gross 53.

[11] A biographical sketch in *History of Napa and Lake Counties, California*, 490-91, indicates that Daniel Otis Hunt (William Henry's older brother) attended Lawrence Academy.

[12] The old brick schoolhouse is still standing as part of the house at 1234 Monument Street—Concord Historical Commission, *Historic Resources Masterplan of Concord, Massachusetts* 97.

[13] I have been unable to discover French's source for Hunt's presence and lecturing at the School of Philosophy. William Torrey Harris's scrapbooks of newspaper clippings describing sessions of the School of Philosophy include no reference to Hunt, nor do printed programs for the school's sessions.

[14] The annual Concord town report for the year 1844-1845 places her in District No. 7, the North Quarter, where the Hunt children attended school. The town report for 1845-1846 shows the posthumous payment of her wages to her father from the funds allotted to District No. 4, the West Quarter (now West Concord), which seems very far for her to have traveled twice daily.

[15] Downs's original draft lecture (titled "Concord, Massachusetts, Its Men and Its Women") is in the CFPL Special Collections. It was edited by Walter Harding and published in *American Heritage* under the title "Mr. Hawthorne, Mr. Thoreau, Miss Alcott, Mr. Emerson, and Me." Passages here quoted are taken from the edited, published version.

[16] The section "Marriages, Births, and Deaths in Concord, in 1861" in the printed Concord town report for the period 4 March 1861 to 3 March 1862 refers to one suicide by drowning. According to her manuscript death card, Ellen M. Hunt died on 8 April 1861.

[17] One accidental drowning is listed in "Marriages, Births, and Deaths in Concord, in 1879" in the printed town report for 1879/1880. Clarissa Cutter's transcribed manuscript death record gives her date of death as 30 May 1879.

[18] The list of deaths in the 1883/1884 printed municipal report specifies that Caroline B. Hunt (one of the daughters of Nehemiah, Jr.) drowned herself.

[19] The original petition, signed by some four hundred Concord residents (including Thoreau) is in the collection of the Thoreau Society. Thanks to Jeffrey Cramer, Curator of the Henley Library at the Thoreau Institute at Walden Woods, for checking the petition for Hunts.

[20] Although Allen French refers to Elizabeth Baker as a widow, Hunt's niece Mary Jacobs—French's major source of information on Mrs. Hunt—does not use that word.

[21] Jacobs, biographical form, Allen French Papers. The year of birth on Elizabeth Hunt's gravestone is 1829. The names of her parents are included in the transcribed record of her death in 1903, which indicates that her father was born in Philadelphia, her mother in Charleston. In his Social Circle biography of Hunt, French spells the parents' last name McEwen.

[22] The federal census for 1860 gives Theodore's age as nine. He is listed as Theodore Hunt rather than Theodore Baker.

[23] Russell 256-259; Gross 51.

[24] Concord's printed annual town reports and school reports provide the names of town officers and committee members.

[25] Phone conversation with David Wood, Curator of the Concord Museum, 30 January 2002.

[26] Concord Historical Commission, *Historic Resources Masterplan* 96; Keyes 22.

[27] Robbins, Hunt biographical/genealogical sheet; French, "William Henry Hunt" 266; CFPL Obituary Scrapbook Volume 2, 96.

[28] The Concord Authors Collection in the CFPL includes a copy.

[29] Information about the Hunt Gymnasium comes from printed Concord annual reports for the relevant years.

[30] During the nineteenth century, the upper part of Monument Street (beyond the Old Manse and the avenue to the Battle Monument) was called the River Road to Carlisle (Keyes 1-66, page headings).

[31] Nehemiah Hunt, son of Nehemiah and Submit Bateman Hunt, was born in 1764 and died in 1846 (Robbins, Hunt biographical/genealogical sheet). He married Mary Edes in Lexington in 1788 (*Lexington, Mass. Record of Births, Marriages and Deaths* 124).

[32] Mary Edes Hunt—William Henry's grandmother—was born in 1766 and died in Concord on 7 January 1849 (Robbins, Hunt biographical/genealogical sheet; *Concord, Massachusetts, Births, Marriages, and Deaths* 412). Edward Jarvis wrote that she "had a loom and wove domestic cloth for our and other families, and also rag carpets" (168).

[33] "The drop in average [wood] consumption [by the 1830s] came principally from the replacement of fireplaces first by the Franklin stove, and then by cookstoves and airtight box stoves, which were advocated and advertised in the [*New England*] *Farmer* in the 1820s" (Donahue 57-58). Daniel Hunt's household was clearly not on the cutting edge of innovation in heating and cooking.

[34] "A frequent accompaniment of the kitchen fireplace ... was the various forms of the 'roasting-kitchen' [tin kitchen] ... [T]hey were a box-like arrangement open on one side which when in use was turned to the fire. Like other utensils of the day, they often stood up on legs, to bring the open side before the blaze. A little door at the back could be opened for convenience in basting the roast. These kitchens came in various sizes for roasting birds or joints, and in them bread was occasionally baked" (Earle 65-66). In his *A Boy Sixty Years Ago*, George Frisbie Hoar wrote of the use of tin kitchens during his youth (11-12).

[35] George Barrell Emerson estimated that the average amount of wood needed for fuel per household per year during the period of Hunt's youth was between thirteen and fourteen cords (19).

[36] The 1893/1894 printed Concord annual report includes a discussion of the need for and recommendations on the construction of a sewerage system (124-135).

[37] The Shattuck house and the Thoreau house were sections of the building known today as the Colonial Inn, on Monument Square. Storekeeper, businessman, and investor Daniel Shattuck owned the western and central portions. The central section had served as Deacon John White's store, which Shattuck bought. The eastern section was occupied by John Thoreau (Henry's grandfather) and his family from 1799 (Wheeler House File Mo 4).

[38] The Middlesex County courthouse that Hunt saw burning stood on Monument Square, on the corner across from the "Thoreau section" of the Shattuck/Thoreau building. Constructed in 1794, it was "a beautiful structure with a high

tower on the top and was far more elegant and imposing than the present one" (Jarvis 258). It burned in 1849 and was replaced with a new courthouse, which was sold to the town for a pittance when the county courts left Concord altogether in 1867. Sold by the town, the replacement courthouse became the home of the Middlesex Mutual Fire Insurance Company. This building still stands at 30 Monument Square.

[39] The Emeline (Emmeline) Barrett house originally stood on Monument Square, was moved in 1820 to the corner of Monument Street and Court Lane, and later moved again, to its current location at 30/32 Court Lane. Emeline Barrett—granddaughter of Captain Nathan Barrett of Punkatasset and daughter of Nathan Barrett, Jr. and his wife Mary Jones Barrett—bought the double house after the deaths of her brother Nathan and his widow, who had lived there. She kept a popular boarding house in it for decades (Wheeler House File Cou 1; Concord Historical Commission, *Survey*, Vol. 1, 269-271). She died in 1892 (Concord death card).

[40] The Keyes house (the present 15 Monument Street) started out about 1780 as a wing on the Main Street house of Elnathan Jones. Before 1837, it was moved to where Concord's Town House now stands. There it was used as a store by Thoreau's father John, among others, and for the law offices of John Keyes and his son John Shepard Keyes. J.S. Keyes sold the building to the town in 1850, bought it back, and moved it to its current location to permit construction of the Town House (Wheeler House File Mo 5).

[41] The Benjamin/Goodnow/Jacobs house at 41 Monument Street was built around 1820. Charles Goodnow came into possession of it in 1845 and kept school there, first in the house, later in a separate building (Concord Historical Commission, *Survey*, Vol. 2, 652-656).

[42] Originally the schoolhouse on the property of the present 41 Monument Street, the house now numbered 53 Monument, was moved and occupied by stonemason Thomas Ford Hunt—a brother of Daniel and Nehemiah and an uncle of William Henry—in the 1850s (Concord Historical Commission, *Survey*, Vol. 2, 670-672).

[43] The Eaton/Richardson house at 63 Monument Street was built in 1847 for furniture dealer Lorenzo Eaton, who rented the house when he moved to Pennsylvania not long afterward. Upon returning to Concord, Eaton lived in the house again before selling it to his sister, Mrs. C.O. Richardson (Concord Historical Commission, *Survey*, Vol. 2, 676-678).

[44] Dentist Andrew Edwards (who was fifty-four at the taking of the 1850 federal census) lived in the present 50 Monument Street—formerly the home of Dr. Josiah Bartlett—in the 1840s and 1850s. Arthur Ricketson (a son of Thoreau's New Bedford friend Daniel Ricketson) and Edward Waldo Emerson were among the later occupants of the house (Concord Historical Commission, *Survey*, Vol. 2, 664-668).

[45] With his family, Jack Garrison—a fugitive slave—occupied a windmill building erected off Monument Street in 1835 by Nathaniel Rice. When the

windmill fell into disrepair and had to be taken down, John Garrison (Jack's son) moved another building to the vicinity (about 1845). After that burned, the cottage now standing at 78 Monument Street was built to replace it. The Garrisons remained there until the 1870s (Concord Historical Commission, *Survey*, Vol. 2, 584-588). Edward Jarvis wrote of the Garrisons: "Jack Garrison was a fugitive slave from New Jersey in the early part of this century. He married Caesar's daughter. He was a laborer, a wood-sawyer. It was a familiar sight his going about with his saw-horse on his shoulder and his saw on his arm. Both families, Caesar's and Garrison's, were independent. They earned a comfortable living and lived respectably in their homes. They had good houses, well furnished and kept neatly. They had a plenty to eat and to wear. Some of the ladies in the village in their walks called there and now and then were invited to tea. Mrs. Robbins and Mrs. Garrison always received them cordially and, as they were good cooks, they entertained their company in pleasant and comfortable manner. No white laborer's families were more respected. Garrison had two sons and two daughters. These were bright and intelligent and well trained at home. They went to the town school and were all good scholars. They associated on equal terms with the other boys and girls and were always acceptable companions in their plays when they came from school" (188-189).

[46] Built about 1827 as the parsonage for the Trinitarian Congregational Church (which broke off from the First Parish in 1826), the house now numbered 98 Monument Street was sold in the 1830s to Francis R. Gourgas, publisher of the *Concord Freeman*, a local newspaper with a distinctly Democratic slant. Gourgas, who was of Swiss-French ancestry, held a place in town and state politics and was a member of the Social Circle (Concord Historical Commission, *Survey*, Vol. 2, 702-706).

[47] The present 93 Monument Street, built around 1825, was bought in the 1840s by Addison Grant Fay—first minister of Concord's Universalist Church, pencilmaker, and, later, owner of the American Powder Company. In the 1850s, Fay's pencil shop stood near the house (Concord Historical Commission, *Survey*, Vol. 2, 696-700).

[48] The Abel B. Heywood house no longer stands. Heywood inherited it from Humphrey Barrett, who hanged himself in 1827. Keyes described Heywood as "a very enterprising farmer" who "would raise the earliest peas[,] corn and potatoes and built much good stone wall, and improved his land greatly" (49). A captain of the Concord Artillery, Heywood "spent lots of money for powder & music &c.[,] got to drinking badly and had terrible attacks of delirium tremens[,] one of which killed him." The house was taken down by subsequent owner D.G. Lang, who built a new one on the property.

[49] Concord Civil War hero George Lincoln Prescott grew up in an old house that stood where 214 Monument Street stands today. His parents Timothy and Maria King Prescott moved there from Littleton in 1833. Prescott, brother-in-law of John Shepard Keyes (who married his half-sister Martha in 1844), was killed at Petersburg in 1864. The old house was moved and Prescott's widow built

the house now on the property in 1876 (Concord Historical Commission, *Survey*, Vol. 2, 708-710).

[50] The widow Jones lived in the house popularly known as the "Bullet Hole House," which is located at 242 Monument Street. A British regular is said to have fired at earlier resident Elisha Jones on 19 April 1775 and to have missed his target, leaving the hole that is still visible to the left of the ell doorway. Elisha's son James married Francis Barrett's widow, who had eight children by her first marriage. After James Jones died (1838), the house was bought by Nathan Barrett and later by John Shepard Keyes, who renovated and expanded it (Wheeler House File Mo 8).

[51] The Ripley family occupied the Old Manse, now 269 Monument Street. Since the Reverend Ezra Ripley—longtime minister of the First Parish—died in 1841, when William Henry Hunt was still a toddler, the Mr. Ripley he refers to must be Ezra's son the Reverend Samuel Ripley (half-brother of Emerson's father William and husband of Sarah Alden Bradford Ripley). When Samuel Ripley retired from his pastorate in Waltham in 1846, he returned to Concord and the Manse. He died in 1847 (Goodwin, "Ripley, Samuel").

[52] The Reverend George Frederick Simmons was the son-in-law of Samuel and Sarah Alden Bradford Ripley, husband of their daughter Mary Emerson Ripley Simmons (Goodwin, "Simmons, George Frederick"). In 1848, Simmons built a house and set up a small-scale farm next to the Manse, just beyond the avenue leading to the Battle Monument (Keyes 37; Simmons). The Simmons house no longer stands.

[53] Clarissa Flint Cutter Hunt—William Henry's mother—and John Flint were both children of Abishai and Patty Brown Flint (Concord death cards). John Flint built the present 418/422 Monument Street on Flint family property (Concord Historical Commission, *Survey*, Vol. 2, 712-716).

[54] The 1850 federal census identifies Jonas C. Monroe, aged thirty-seven, as a shoemaker. He lived and worked in the small house now numbered 475 Monument Street (Concord Historical Commission, *Survey*, Vol. 2, 718-719), where (as the census records) he lived with his wife Abigail and five children.

[55] Edward Wright was married to Mary Hunt, a daughter of Nehemiah, Sr. and a sister of Daniel and Nehemiah, Jr. Wright lived in the present 577 Monument Street, raised broom corn and made brooms there. He died in 1825. His widow sold the house to Jonas Munroe, who quickly sold it to General Joshua Buttrick of the Concord Artillery (Concord Historical Commission, *Survey*, Vol. 2, 726-728). Joshua Buttrick was with Hawthorne in the *Pond Lily* during the search for Martha Hunt's body in July of 1845 (Hawthorne 262).

[56] Minot Pratt and his wife Maria came to Concord from Brook Farm in 1845. They bought the Punkatasset farm now numbered 635 Monument Street, which stands on what was Flint family property in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (Concord Historical Commission, *Survey*, Vol. 2, 606-609). Here Pratt hosted annual picnics for former Brook Farm people and Concord residents. Annie

Sawyer Downs wrote that "all Concord high and low, rich and poor, old and young, wise and foolish" attended these events (96). The Pratts' four children were: Frederick Gray (born 1831); John Bridge (1833); Caroline Hayden (1836); and Theodore Parker (1842) (Richardson 3, 4).

[57] According to John Shepard Keyes, about 1850, Marianne Ripley (sister of Brook Farm founder George Ripley)—an original member of Brook Farm and a teacher there—built a "long narrow house" between the Pratt farm and the house that Ellery Channing had built in 1845 (26). (Miss Ripley first shows up in Concord assessors' records for 1850.) Although Keyes's chronology of the subsequent ownership of the building is somewhat confused and confusing, the gist of what he has to say is that Elizabeth Baker lived in it after Miss Ripley and that William Henry Hunt eventually bought it at auction. There seems to be very little information about the boarding school that Marianne Ripley kept there. The house was taken down by Russell Robb.

[58] Hunt here repeats the irreverent epithet applied to Miss Ripley by her fellow Brook Farmers and recorded in first-hand accounts of the community and its residents. J. Homer Doucet noted in his "Reminiscences of the Brook Farm Association" that John Cheever always addressed one woman "who was very tall and erect" as "your perpendicular majesty" (236). Kate Sloan Gaskill wrote in "A Girl's Recollections of Brook Farm School": "Miss Marianna Ripley had charge of the dining room. She was very tall and straight and the mischievous boys and girls spoke of her as 'Her Perpendicular Majesty' " (306).

[59] William Ellery Channing—poet, friend of Emerson, Thoreau, Alcott, and Hawthorne, brother-in-law of Margaret Fuller, and first biographer of Thoreau—bought farmland just below the old Hunt house on Punkatasset in the spring of 1845. A house was built by September, when Channing, his wife, and their baby daughter moved in (McGill 86). The Channings and their growing family remained until 1849, when they removed to a house on Main Street. They sold the Punkatasset house to the Reverend Samuel D. Robbins, "a funny little round man, full of wit" (Keyes 24), who later moved to Framingham. Thomas Ford Hunt (William Henry's uncle) then came into possession of it and grew grapes on the property. After his death (1885), the house fell into disrepair. Russell Robb tore it down.

[60] A flat stone that fits this description sits atop a stone wall lining the driveway at 709 Monument Street today.

[61] Mary Earle Gould wrote of the set boiler: "By the beginning of the nineteenth century an addition to the chimney was built at the back of the house for a set kettle ... The structure was square and made of bricks, with a large brass kettle built in, coming flush to the top. Below this was a place for the fire, with an iron door with slides to make the draft" (60). The set kettle (or boiler) was used for boiling water to wash clothes and for other household purposes.

[62] A clock made to run for eight days without rewinding (Bailey 20). The wall clock that Hunt mentions was an example of a variety developed before 1800 by clockmaker Simon Willard—"an eight-day brass timepiece housed in a wall-

style case that was completely different from the thirty-hour clock case. On February 8, 1802, a patent was granted, and Willard's 'Improved Timepiece' became one of the best-known American clocks ... Today it is generally known as a 'banjo clock' " (Bailey 55). Clocks of this type were made in quantity in Concord in the early nineteenth century (Concord Antiquarian Society). Thanks to David Wood of the Concord Museum for identifying for me the kind of clock referred to by Hunt.

[63] Hunt here refers to the introduction and growth of radio broadcasting, the development of which was intense in the period just before he wrote his reminiscences: "Between 1921 and 1922 the sale of radio receiving sets and of component parts for use in home construction of such sets began a boom that was followed immediately by a large increase in the number of transmitting stations. By November 1, 1922, 564 broadcasting stations had been licensed" ("Broadcasting" 211). The proliferation of stations continued in the early 1920s: "By the end of 1924 there were 583 stations on the air and an estimated 3 million receiving sets in use ... With the telephone long lines as its property, AT&T logically gave the impetus to network broadcasting ... AT&T pursued the interconnection of stations with vigor, and in 1924 it linked 26 stations coast to coast" ("Radio" 151).

[64] From *The Biglow Papers*, First Series, No. 1 ("A Letter from Mr. Ezekiel Biglow of Jaalam to the Hon. Joseph T. Buckingham . . . . ").

[65] Ebenezer Rockwood Hoar—lawyer, judge, Massachusetts senator, Attorney General of the United States in the cabinet of President Ulysses S. Grant, and representative in the United States Congress—lived with his wife, Caroline Downes Brooks Hoar, and children in the house now numbered 194 Main Street, built in 1845 (Concord Historical Commission, *Survey*, Vol. 2, 399-403). A Whig, Free-Soiler, and Republican, E.R. Hoar was an abolitionist, as was Mrs. Hoar, who was the step-daughter of Concord Ladies' Anti-Slavery Society leader Mary Merrick Brooks. In April of 1860, Judge Hoar issued the writ of habeas corpus effecting the release of Frank Sanborn by United States marshals attempting to arrest him for his involvement in the John Brown raid on Harpers Ferry.

[66] Francis Edwin and Ann Hagar Bigelow—abolitionists involved in the Underground Railroad in Concord—lived in what is now 19 Sudbury Road, just across from the Nathan Brooks house, which occupied the present Concord Free Public Library site (Concord Historical Commission, *Survey*, Vol. 3, 148-150). The Bigelows harbored fugitive slave Shadrach Minkins one night in February of 1851.

[67] Antislavery activist Mary Merrick Brooks lived with her husband Nathan Brooks (a lawyer), her step-daughter Caroline (later Mrs. E.R. Hoar), and her son George (who became a lawyer and a judge) at the intersection of Main Street and Sudbury Road. The house, moved in 1872 to make way for the Concord Free Public Library, stands today at 45 Hubbard Street (Concord Historical Commission, *Survey*, Vol. 1, 471-474).

[68] Dr. Josiah Bartlett—a physician in Concord for more than fifty-seven years—lived in the present 50 Monument Street during the 1820s and early 1830s, then moved to what is now 35 Lowell Road (Concord Historical Commission, *Survey*, Vol. 2, 664-668). Bartlett married Martha Bradford (sister of Sarah Alden Bradford, who married Samuel Ripley), with whom he had nine children. He was involved in the temperance as well as the antislavery cause, and was active in the Underground Railroad (Reynolds 174, 180, 181). Bartlett died in 1878.

[69] The Compromise of 1850 was the "last major involvement in national affairs by Senators Henry Clay of Kentucky, Daniel Webster of Massachusetts, and John C. Calhoun of South Carolina" ("Compromise of 1850"). By the Compromise, California was admitted to the Union as a free state, the territories of New Mexico and Utah would decide the slavery question for themselves upon admission to the Union, the boundary between Texas and New Mexico was established, and the slave trade was abolished in Washington, D.C. The Compromise of 1850 also included the Fugitive Slave Law, which required the return of runaway slaves to their owners.

[70] Hunt presumably here refers to the rise and decline of the Liberty, Free-Soil, Whig, and Know-Nothing parties ("Liberty Party"; "Free-Soil Party"; "Whig Party"; "Know-Nothing Party") and of the ultimate transformation of the Whig Party into the Republican Party, which quickly became the choice of the North and of antislavery proponents and was the Democratic Party's contender for political power in the period leading into the Civil War ("Republican Party").

[71] John Shepard Keyes identifies Mr. and Mrs. Charles Willis as relatives of the Reverend Samuel D. Robbins (who bought Ellery Channing's Punkatasset house). The Willises lived in "a small one story cottage first used in my memory as a cooper's shop by the 1st Capt. Barrett ... [and] subsequently altered into a dwelling" (19).

[72] Russell includes asparagus and celery among those early vegetables successfully grown near Boston "on southern slopes and under hotbed glass" by the turn of the nineteenth century (163). In the 1850s, Concord farmers began seriously to grow asparagus and within a few decades produced half the asparagus crop of Massachusetts (Russell 270). By 1860, tomatoes "had grown in favor for twenty years and sold in large quantities" (Russell 222).

[73] The gridiron was an iron kitchen implement consisting of a barred cooking surface allowing drippings to drain, with a handle and legs. Gridirons came in two shapes, circular (the older variety) and oblong, with grooves or troughs to catch some of the meat juices (Earle 61-62).

[74] As Chairman of Concord's Water Commissioners, John Shepard Keyes initiated the planning of a town water system, which was designed by and built under the direction of William Wheeler (Hudson 334, 343). The Water Commissioners presented plans to undertake the project in the printed annual municipal report for 1872/1873 (40-43). In the annual report for 1874/1875, the hiring of Wheeler, laying of the first pipes, and letting of water from Sandy Pond in Lincoln into the pipes were documented (60- 83).

[75] "Butter and cheese production up to Civil War times was still largely on an individual basis, and usually the province of the women of the household" (Russell 204).

[76] The fact that the celebration of Christmas was forbidden in Puritan New England (Fischer 163) affected the importance attached to that holiday even into the nineteenth century. On the other hand, the celebration of fast and thanksgiving days was a part of Puritan culture, and an annual fall day of thanksgiving was appointed from the seventeenth century on (Love 239-255). Like William Henry Hunt, George Frisbie Hoar looked back on Thanksgiving during his boyhood as "the great day of the year" (29).

[77] "By the late eighteenth century, school 'societies' were established in several quarters, or neighborhoods, of Concord. In 1789, these independent societies were sanctioned by law and transformed into official school districts. In 1799, the town built a schoolhouse in each of its seven districts" (Woodman). Town reports from the district school period identify Concord's school districts: Center (Centre) District, No. 1, providing multiple schools to serve the village center, which was more densely populated than the outlying areas; East Quarter, or Meriam's (Merriam's) Corner, No. 2; South Quarter, No. 3; West Quarter, or Factory Village, No. 4; Barrett's Mill, No. 5; Bateman's Pond, No. 6; and North Quarter, or Monument Street, No. 7. Dick O'Connor has examined the various local sources on Concord's district school system and, in his "Thoreau in the Town School, 1837," described conditions in the Center grammar school, in which Thoreau briefly taught in 1837.

[78] In the *Annual Report of the School Committee, and of the Superintendent of Public Schools, for the Year Ending April 1, 1857*, the children of District No. 7 were congratulated on "the prospect of having a better school-room sometime during the year" (22). Town expenditures in the annual municipal report for the subsequent year show the outlay of $1,311.14 for "Repair of School House in District No. 7" (7). The school report for the same year mentions the physical improvements to the school, but also notes that "The number attending this school was but nine or ten—hardly enough to keep alive a teacher's animation" (14-15).

[79] The Nathan Barrett house on Punkatasset—in William Henry Hunt's time the next house beyond his family's farm—is today numbered 775 Monument Street. Radically renovated by the Reverend Charles Hutchins in the late 19th and early 20th century, in 1844 it served as the first Concord home of George William Curtis (Concord Historical Commission, *Survey*, Vol. 2, 614-624).

[80] Found in the 1866/1867 printed annual town report (13). Hunt is in error about the amount expended, however. The town paid William Holden ten dollars, not twenty, "for transporting children to town, last winter."

[81] The centralization of schools in Concord was begun under Superintendent of Schools John B. Tileston, who lived in the Barrett farm on Punkatasset before the Hutchins family bought it (Concord Historical Commission,

Historic Resources Masterplan 96), and completed under Superintendent William Lorenzo Eaton. Eaton summarized the history of Concord's school consolidation in the *Annual Report of the School Committee of Concord, Massachusetts, for the Year 1891-92* ("Appendix F" 48-52). William Henry Hunt was Secretary of the School Committee at the time Eaton's report was printed.

[82] In addition to those acknowledged in the list of works cited and in the endnotes, I would like to thank the following people for helpfulness of various kinds during the preparation of this piece: Reed Anthony; Bette Aschaffenburg; Sterling Delano; Marie Eaton; Ray Gerke; Nick Graham (Massachusetts Historical Society); Robert Hall; Jiro Ishihara; Freelon Morris; Wayne Perry; Daniel Shealy, Allen Spalt, Richard Stevenson; James Stoessel; Michael Wilson; Elizabeth Witherell; and Joyce Woodman.

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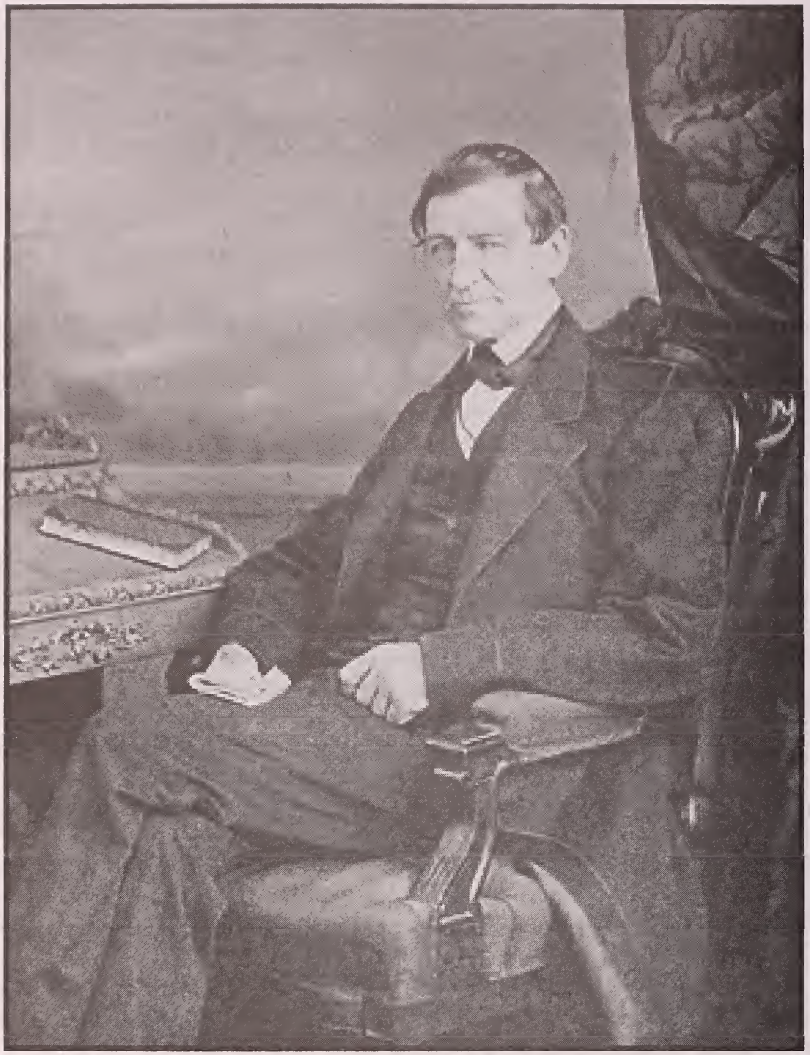

Ralph Waldo Emerson
Photograph from the Collection of Joel Myerson

Ralph Waldo Emerson's Nature*: Puritan Typology and German Idealism*

Patrick Labriola

In American literary history Romanticism is often viewed as the transitional point in which colonial literature ends and an American literary tradition begins. As representatives of this new literary tradition, Hawthorne and Melville reject the "typology" of the past by introducing psychology and new symbolism in their writings. In *The Scarlet Letter*, Hawthorne criticizes the intolerance of Puritan society by presenting his characters from a psychological perspective which allows one to look beyond Puritan ideas about sin and morality into the heart of the individual. In *Moby-Dick*, Melville rejects an entire tradition of Puritan typology by illustrating that the symbol of the "white" whale can represent good or evil in the world, or anything else for that matter. As a result of this narrative and symbolic innovation, typology loses a great deal of its significance in the course of the nineteenth century under the Romantics and moves "from the mark of True Belief among the New England Puritans to the butt of iconoclastic joking by the time of Emily Dickinson and Mark Twain" (Keller 274).

In Emerson's writings, however, the typology of Puritan history[1] is combined with the concept of "spirit" in German Idealism[2] to create a Transcendental philosophy of nature. At first glance, though, Emerson seems to be dismissing the typology of the past in favor of man's personal relationship with the universe: "Our age is retrospective.... The foregoing generations beheld God and nature face to face; we, through their eyes. Why should not we also enjoy an original relation to the universe?" (*Works* I: 7). However, at the root of all his nature writings is the Puritan belief that God speaks to man through nature and that nature itself is the great moral educator. Although Emerson never regarded himself as a representative of Puritan typology, his writings are loaded with references that draw upon a typological past. In *Nature* he clearly states that "every natural fact is a symbol of some spiritual fact" (18) and that "the world is emblematic" (21). Therefore, his role as the leading theoretician in the Transcendental movement is twofold: on the one hand he proclaims a new era for the independent thinker in America, and on the other he firmly holds on to a typological past.

In order to understand Emerson's philosophy of nature, it is important to take a look at the history of American typology and its relationship to German Idealism. Until the fourth century there was no standard canon of New Testament literature, and in order to draw a direct line between the old and these new writings, passages were chosen from the Old Testament that foreshadowed or prophesied the coming of Christ. For example, in Matthew 12:40 Christ says: "For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth." Jonah is therefore depicted as a type of Christ, someone who foreshadows, emulates, or likens to Christ, and thus the study of types or typology was born. The gospels of the New Testament are based specifically on typology since the writers' purpose was "to demonstrate to a Jewish audience that the men and institutions of the Old Covenant have been excelled and abolished by the New" (Davis 17).

In colonial America, typology was a common device used for writing histories or biographies. In William Bradford's *Of Plymouth Plantation 1620-1647*, a narrative of the Mayflower's journey to the New World, a biblical comparison is drawn between the Israelites' captivity in Egypt, their deliverance and search for a homeland, and the Pilgrims' spiritual persecution in Holland, their escape from oppression, and their arrival in the promised land of America. Bradford describes the Pilgrims' journey to the new land and their arrival on Cape Cod in which "they fell upon their knees and blessed the God of Heaven who had brought them over the vast and furious ocean, and delivered them from all the perils and miseries thereof" (Bradford 61). Like William Bradford, Cotton Mather uses typology to suggest a parallel between great men of the Old Testament and early leaders of America. In Book II of *Magnalia Christi Americana* (1702), Mather provides biographical sketches of his contemporaries by comparing them to figures in the Bible; in Chapter IV, for instance, Governor John Winthrop of the Massachusetts Bay Colony is depicted as the American Nehemiah. Mather presents Winthrop as an unselfish spiritual leader of the new American nation who is always willing to provide for his citizens: "Friend, it is a severe Winter, and I doubt you are but meanly provided for Wood; wherefore I would have you supply your self at my Wood-Pile till this cold Season be over" (Mather 218).

Jonathan Edwards' usage of typology is a radical departure from the historical approach of Bradford and Mather because he finds the presence of God in nature itself. In other words, Edwards is distinguished from earlier typologists through his focus on nature as an extension of God's greatness, rather than providing historical links between individuals in his time and their corresponding biblical anti-types. In *Images or Shadows of Divine Things* (1703-1758), Edwards provides a compilation of all biblical types found in nature that are brought to light through the central metaphor of the "sun," which represents God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.[3] Edwards argues that spiritually the sun is the center of the universe, and through nature God reveals Himself to mankind in images and shadows. The unity of the sun

represents for Edwards the complexity and unity of the divine Trinity so that "the Father is as the substance of the sun; the Son is as the brightness and glory of the disk of the sun, or that bright and glorious form under which it appears to our eyes; the Holy Ghost is as the heat and powerful influence, which acts upon the sun itself, and being diffusive, enlightens, warms, enlivens and comforts the world" (Edwards 64).

As the leading scholar on Puritanism and early American religious history, Perry Miller was one of the first scholars to see a decisive link between Edwards' typology and Emerson's Transcendentalism. In *Errand into the Wilderness*, he asserts that Edwards would have disagreed with Emerson's *Nature* if confronted with the work; however, there are certain religious and cultural traditions in New England that hold these two writers together. The major difference lies not in the fact that Edwards was a Calvinist and Emerson a Unitarian minister, but rather that Edwards went to nature to decipher the messages of God, and Emerson went to nature to experience God for himself: "Edwards went to nature, in all passionate love, convinced that man could receive from it impressions which he must then try to interpret, whereas Emerson went to Nature, no less in love with it, convinced that in man there is a spontaneous correlation with the received impressions" (Miller 185).

An even more pointed distinction is to define "Emerson as an Edwards in whom the concept of original sin has evaporated" (185). The Puritans believed that all knowledge of God is derived from Scripture, not through inspiration; and although God created the book of nature, mankind was not free to experience God in nature for itself. Miller explains that this strict hierarchy was fundamental to Puritan society since it taught them that civil and ecclesiastical law was based on the exact word of Scripture. God was therefore represented by the government of New England townships and communities, and the radicalism of mysticism and pantheism was suppressed. New England was the newly founded Israel, the Puritans were God's chosen people, and the Bible was the absolute law of the land. As an example of how deeply rooted typology was in American religious life, Charles Feidelson writes that a snake once appeared behind the pulpit at a sermon in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and was killed by one of the elders. John Winthrop wrote in his journal that "the serpent is the devil; the synod, the representative of the churches of Christ in New England. The devil had formerly and lately attempted their disturbance and dissolution; but their faith in the seed of the woman overcame him and crushed his head" (Feidelson 78).

Emerson's use of nature typology can be analyzed on three different levels: first, Emerson believes that nature enables the individual to learn about God through the signs of nature (like Edwards); second, that spirit has changed itself into a natural substance in order to reveal itself to mankind; and third, conscious human spirit and the unconscious spirit of nature are united when these two spiritual forces come together. Like Edwards' typology of nature, Emerson views nature as a means of educating the individual about what is morally right and wrong. As an example of how the individual is educated through nature, Emerson illustrates that language

itself is derived from the symbolism of nature: "As we go back in history, language becomes more picturesque, until its infancy, when it is all poetry; or, all spiritual facts are represented by natural symbols" (19). Emerson argues that since language is taken from nature, and since God has created nature, He has provided mankind with a sense of morality in nature itself. In fact, Emerson claims that every word used to express a moral or intellectual fact can be traced back to the root of nature: "Right originally means straight; wrong means twisted. Spirit primarily means wind" (18, *Collected Works I,* Emerson's italics). Finally, he states that proverbs and moral truths also draw upon images of nature: "A rolling stone gathers no moss; A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush.... Long-lived trees make roots first" (22). Emerson's use of typology on this level is reminiscent of Edwards' nature typology because it points to nature as a moral educator: "Young twigs are easily bent and made to grow another way, old trees most difficultly" (Edwards 50).

The point that clearly separates Emerson from Edwards is the Transcendental belief that God has transformed Himself into the phenomenon of nature in order to instruct us, or as Emerson puts it: "Nature is made to conspire with spirit to emancipate us" (30). Emerson argues that we must "regard nature as a phenomenon, not a substance; to attribute necessary existence to spirit" (30), that "nature always wears the colors of the spirit" (10), and that "the spiritual element is essential to its perfection" (15). Emerson draws upon the tradition of German Idealism and maintains that the conscious spirit in man and the unconscious spirit of nature come together in Transcendental harmony. In the section on "Spirit," Emerson writes that "three problems are put by nature to the mind; What is matter? Whence is it? and Whereto?" (37). Concerning the first question, Emerson argues that God's spirit in nature is perfect and that without contact with this spirit we wander aimlessly throughout the world. In reference to the next questions "Whence is it? and Whereto?" Emerson writes that we experience nature, not in terms of space and time, but rather spiritually, and that "the Supreme Being, does not build up nature around us, but puts it forth through us, as the life of the tree puts forth new branches and leaves through the pores of the old" (38). In other words, mankind is an integral part in the process of life and growth in nature. We can therefore attribute the first level of interpretation, in which nature is presented as a system of encoded signs, to the tradition of Edwards' typology of nature; however, the next two levels—in which spirit reveals itself in terms of phenomenon, and the fact that human spirit and the spirit of nature form a harmonious world-soul—can be ascribed to German Idealism.

There are numerous references which indicate that Emerson was acquainted with German Idealism, and specifically Schelling's philosophy of nature. Stanley Vogel writes that prior to the publication of *Nature* in 1836, Emerson received the greatest amount of information on Schelling's philosophy from Coleridge, "whose works he had been reading at that time. Of the post-Kantians the Concord writers had more in common with Schelling than with anyone else" (107). It is also a well-known fact that Coleridge took many of his ideas directly from German philosophers

and, with or without proper documentation, passed them on to Emerson. Since Emerson was such a synthetic thinker, he often did not care about the sources of his information, only that all these ideas together provided him with a comprehensive system for his own philosophy of nature. David M. Robinson writes that "Emerson's *Nature* was his first attempt at a comprehensive and systematic expression of his emerging religious vision, taking as its subject the nature of the external world and the mind's relationship to it" ("Religion" 159). In a very clear reference to Schelling's synthesis of man and nature, Emerson writes in his journal in 1835 that "Unity says Schelling is barren. Duality is necessary to the existence of the World" (*Journals*, V: 30). In 1843, the Transcendentalists' literary journal, the *Dial*, published Schelling's introductory lectures at the University of Berlin from November 1841. In these articles that were translated into English by Frederic Henry Hedge and edited by Emerson,[4] Schelling discusses his new professorship in Berlin and the problematic direction of German Idealism after the death of Hegel. In an earlier letter about the lectures to John F. Heath on 4 August 1842, Emerson writes that "to hear Schelling might well tempt the firmest rooted philosopher from his home, and I confess to more curiosity in respect to his opinions than those of any living psychologist.... There is a grandeur in the attempt to unite natural & moral philosophy which makes him a sort of hero" (*Letters* III: 76-77).

One of the primary ideas in Emerson's *Nature* and Schelling's *Ideas for a Philosophy of Nature* (1797) is that nature is composed of spirit and matter which are joined together in perfect harmony.[5] Emerson writes that "there seems to be a necessity in spirit to manifest itself in material forms" (22), that "behind nature, throughout nature, spirit is present" (38), and that "we can foresee God" in the "distant phenomena of matter" (37). Schelling argues in favor of the spiritual aspect of nature by claiming that "form and matter are inseparable in the organic product" (691) because each part of nature is intricately connected to the whole and this self-organizing principle is only possible through spirit.[6] Schelling claims that nature possesses a spirit that is comparable to the human spirit because the organization of nature does not exist arbitrarily nor is it dependent on the human mind. He writes that "a spirit resides in things outside yourselves which is analogous to your own. For only in spirit which is able to create can concept and actuality, ideal and real, so interpenetrate and unite that no separation is possible between them" (*Werke*, vol. I: 696). Emerson and Schelling refer to nature as the visible appearance of spirit: Emerson writes that "the visible creation [of nature] is the terminus or the circumference of the invisible world" (22, my brackets), and Schelling states that nature is "visible spirit" and that spirit is "invisible nature" (706).

Another point of comparison between Schelling and Emerson is that nature is "absolute" in its power. Whereas Schelling endows nature with the power of the absolute from Fichtean Idealism and the pantheistic philosophy of Spinoza[7], Emerson simply expresses the Puritan belief that God is all-powerful and works upon the life of man. Schelling witnesses this absolute power in the fact that nature is an independent

self-organizing system which embodies both the real and the ideal, that the "organic product embodies the reason for its existence in itself" (690), that nature "is derived from itself" and "continuously returns to itself" (690), and that the unifying component of nature is spirit. In Emerson's writings, the absolute power of nature results from the fact that religious morality is taken directly from nature, that the "noblest ministry of nature is to stand as the apparition of God" (37), and that "the universe becomes transparent, and the light of higher laws than its own, shines through it" (22). Like Schelling, who believes that nature embodies an unconscious spirit which is kindred to the human spirit,[8] Emerson writes that "the world proceeds from the same spirit as the body of man. It is a remoter and inferior incarnation of God, a projection of God in the unconscious. But it differs from the body in one important respect. It is not, like that, now subjected to the human will" (38).

Another important question behind Emerson's and Schelling's nature philosophies is how one achieves harmony with the divine spirit of nature. Emerson and Schelling both assert that man must return to the original state of nature to rediscover his lost spirit. Schelling writes that "human beings previously lived in a (philosophical) state of nature. At that time, man was still one with himself and the world around him" (662). In a similar sense, Emerson writes that nature is "the great organ through which the universal spirit speaks to the individual, and strives to lead back the individual to it" (37). In contrast with Kantian and Fichtean Idealism that view nature either as a "thing in itself" or a "not-I," Schelling asserts that an understanding of the spirit of nature can only be obtained through *intuition*, not through philosophical *reflection* which condemns nature to the position of inanimate object. He writes that "as long as I am *identical* with nature, I understand what living nature is, as well as I understand my own life . . . . but as soon as I separate myself, and, along with myself, everything that is ideal from nature, I experience nothing more than a dead object, and I stop understanding how *life outside* myself is possible" (697-98, Schelling's italics). In the same transcendental sense, Emerson asserts that spirit is essential to an understanding of nature and that the individual must become one in the natural process. For this purpose, Emerson employs the metaphor of the "transparent eye-ball" which illustrates the harmony of man and nature: "I become a transparent eye-ball. I am nothing. I see all. The currents of the Universal Being circulate through me; I am part or particle of God" (10)

Concerning the synthesis of man and nature, Emerson writes that mind and matter belong together "part for part. One is seal, and one is print" (*Works*, "American Scholar," I: 55) and that "the relation between the mind and matter is not fancied by some poet, but stands in the will of God, and so is free to be known by all men" (*Works*, "Nature," I: 22). At another point Emerson observes that man and nature alone have no transcendental meaning, but bring them together, and one finds the harmony of the over-soul. In "The Over-Soul" (1841), which appeared in the same year as Schelling's introductory lecture in Berlin, Emerson develops a philosophy that strongly resembles Schelling's synthesis of man and nature by employing

terminology such as "the absolute" and "progressive nature" and by claiming of the union of man and nature that "the act of seeing and the thing seen, the seer and the spectacle, the subject and the object, are one" (*Works*, I: 160). He argues that when man and nature come together, their two spirits merge into one "over-soul," so that man virtually becomes part of nature, and nature actually becomes part of man. "...The soul's communication of truth is the highest event in nature, since it then does not give somewhat from itself, but it gives itself, or passes into and becomes the man whom it enlightens" (166). In a similar manner, Schelling describes the "world-soul"[9] as the "secret bond that connects our spirit to nature, or that hidden organ through which nature speaks to our spirit or our spirit to nature" (705). In another instance, Schelling asserts that the "absolute identity of the spirit in us and the spirit outside us" (706, Schelling's italics) is made possible through the third party of the world-soul.[10]

In a crucial passage in the "The Over-Soul," Emerson describes the triangular structure of man, nature, and the over-soul as a spiritual bond that "arches over" the individual "like a temple" (165) and that the cohesive power of "that third party ... is God" (164). This is an outstanding example of typology and spiritual Idealism in one image: on the one hand, there is the image of a rainbow-like "arch" or "temple" that joins man and nature together through God. In the Old Testament and in Puritan typology, an "arch" or "temple" is a symbol of God's bond with His people, and in very graphic form, one sees God joining with man in nature itself. On the other hand, this triangular structure of man, nature, and the over-soul is the purest form of dialectic in German Idealism, and represents the point in which man and nature achieve harmony through the merging of their two spirits. David M. Robinson writes that for Emerson "nature's religious value was manifold" since "it suggested the presence of the creator," "provided a spiritual uplift," and "stood as an educator in the moral culture of the soul" ("Natural History" 97). In language that is spiritual and mystical, Emerson speaks of the union of man and nature in terms of "extasy" [sic], "trance," and "prophetic inspiration" as if one "had been 'blasted with excess of light'" (167). The terminology "light" and "prophetic inspiration" reveal that the union of man and nature is a religious experience that connects the individual to the divine.

The Transcendentalists were not interested in compiling a history of typology, but rather in transcending the mere appearances of nature in favor of spirit that exists beyond. They refused to accept Puritan typology in its entirety because it carried along with it limitations of religious freedom and the presentation of God through a one-dimensional forest. By endowing nature with a living spirit from German Idealism, the Transcendentalists were able to move beyond a limited reading of Scripture demanded by the Unitarian ministry and to experience God in nature for themselves.

NOTES

[1]American typology is the study of "types" as they pertain to both individuals and natural phenomena: "orthodox typology" regards Jesus as the antitype and the fulfillment of prophecies from the Old Testament; "spiritual typology" stresses that the moral order of the cosmos is revealed through the individual symbolism of nature itself.

[2]The German Idealist writings of Immanuel Kant, Johann Gottlieb Fichte, Friedrich Wilhelm Josef von Schelling, and Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel express the gradual realization that the divine spirit reveals itself to mankind through nature itself. While Kant argues that *a priori* ideas connect one to the essence of phenomena, and Fichte provides the ego with infinite moral and imaginative power in creating the world, Schelling and Hegel propose that nature possesses spirit that is analogous to the spirit of man.

[3]Lee Rust Brown claims that Emerson's background in Puritan nature typology was augmented by the natural history of his day which he discovered on a visit to the Cabinet of Natural History in Paris in 1833 and which revealed to him the "form and content" (62) of nature itself through the museum's system of classification.

[4]Emerson wrote to Hedge on 21 November 1842: "Along with this sheet I mean to put in the mailbags 'Schelling's Erste Vorlesung' which Wheeler has just sent from Heidelberg, & which you promised to translate for us. I hope it may find you at sufficient leisure to turn it into English forthwith, since it is of such reasonable length" (*Letters*, III: 97-98).

[5]Schelling's philosophy of nature consists of several writings from 1797 to 1801 which include *Ideen zu einer Philosophie der Natur* (1797), *Erster Entwurf eines Systems der Naturphilosophie* (1799), and *Über den wahren Begriff der Naturphilosophie und die richtige Art, ihre Probleme aufzulösen* (1801).

[6]All translations from *Ideas for a Philosophy of Nature* are my own and are based on the following edition: *Schellings Werke*. Ed. Manfred Schröter. 12 vols. Munich: Beck/Oldenbourg, 1927-59.

[7]Schelling writes that Spinoza was "the *first* to consciously see spirit and matter as one" (670, Schelling's italics).

[8]In later works such as the *Stuttgarter Privatvorlesung* (1810) and *Weltaltern* (1811), Schelling asserts that God transformed Himself into the unconscious spirit of nature and the conscious spirit of man in creating the world. Human beings recognize remnants of their lost self in the visible signs of nature.

[9]Schelling entitled his essay from 1798 "Von der Weltseele."

[10]Schelling claims that "Spirit, considered the principle of life, is called *soul*" (701, Schelling's italics).

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The Banfield Grave Site on Dunk Island
Photograph by Robert Zeller

A Thoreau in Paradise: E. J. Banfield's My Tropic Isle

Robert Zeller

In 1997 readers of *The Concord Saunterer* were introduced to E. J. Banfield by James Porter in "Thoreau and Australia: Sauntering Under the Southern Cross." He cites Thoreau's few references to Australia and comments upon them, chiding Thoreau for his characterization in "Walking" of the settlement of Australia as a "retrograde movement" and asserting that it was really the continuation of a westward voyage ("Thoreau" 74; Thoreau, "Walking" 604). Porter also notes that he came to Thoreau through his reading of Banfield. In the same issue, he offers excerpts from Banfield's work to give a flavor of his writing ("Australia's"). However, his focus is as much on himself as on Banfield, and he does not give any extended discussion of Banfield or his work. I want to pick up where he left off, filling in some background on Banfield and discussing that author's second book, *My Tropic Isle*, in terms of *Walden*. I hope to show that Banfield did more than just engage in a Thoreauvian retreat from society; he developed a similar philosophical outlook.

Edmund James Banfield (1852-1923) was born in Liverpool and emigrated to Australia as a child. His father had gone out earlier in the gold rushes, making him the type of person Thoreau criticizes in "Life without Principle": "Men rush to California and Australia as if the true gold were to be found in that direction; but that is to go to the very opposite extreme to where it lies" (165). Failing at the diggings, the elder Banfield founded a newspaper in Ararat, Victoria. Edmund worked on his father's paper, then moved to tropical north Queensland to continue his journalism career. In 1897, suffering from nervous collapse, he decided to move with his wife to Dunk Island, just off the coast. He soon recovered his health and lived there for the rest of his life, producing numerous articles and three books, from which Porter (who lived for a time on the neighboring island of Bedarra) takes his excerpts.

Banfield's first book, *Confessions of a Beachcomber*, has as its epigraph a quotation from the final chapter of *Walden*: "If a man does not keep pace with his companions, perhaps it is because he hears a different drummer. Let him step to the music which he hears" (326). Banfield refers to Thoreau periodically in his

writings, and he uses other quotations from Thoreau as epigraphs for chapters in his books, including two from the "Friday" chapter of *A Week* for chapters in *My Tropic Isle*. While he imitated Thoreau's separation from society in moving to Dunk Island and professes admiration for him, in *Confessions* he disclaims any intention of emulating Thoreau's literary endeavors: "however cheerful a disciple I am of that philosopher, far be it from me to belittle him by parody" (44).

H. M. Green echoes Banfield's self-deprecating assessment in his *History of Australian Literature*: "Banfield has . . . been compared with Thoreau, but the comparison is far too flattering from a literary though not from a human point of view" (789-90). For the most part, I would agree with Green. And Harry Heseltine asserts that "The whole of *Confessions* is structured on much the same lines as *Walden*" (56), but that similarity strikes me as tenuous at best, because rather than choosing to organize *Confessions* according to the seasonal cycle, Banfield opted for a more episodic arrangement of his material. In the first part of that book, Banfield does situate himself geographically and historically, but after that he treats the reader to an inventory of the island's curiosities, including its indigenous population. There is no counterpart to the "Economy" chapter and not much reflection on his Dunk Island enterprise.

More interesting to me are the parallels between *Walden* and Banfield's second book. I want to argue that the first eight chapters of *My Tropic Isle* constitute a sort of mini-*Walden*, a statement of the philosophy underlying Banfield's chosen life. Though not quite an imitation of Thoreau's work, these chapters do have some affinities with it: they deal with some of the same subjects as *Walden*—economy, house building, clothing, reading, sounds, and animal neighbors, to name a few—and in fact in a few places Banfield echoes Thoreau. I would not go so far as to argue that Banfield consciously modeled *My Tropic Isle* on *Walden*. Rather I would suggest that the similarities are due either to the influence of Thoreau's philosophy on Banfield's thought or to the similar concerns of two writers who have deliberately chosen to live apart from society yet write for it.

Just as *Walden*—also Thoreau's second book, coincidentally—was published well after the author's sojourn at the pond, *My Tropic Isle* was published in 1911, three years after *Confessions* and fourteen after Banfield's removal to Dunk. In his first chapter, he states his reason for producing the second volume—to satisfy the demands of his readers for more particulars: "Since a demand is made for more complete details than were given in 'Confessions,' . . . I propose . . . to hastily fill in a few blanks in my previous sketch of our island career" (15). Thoreau could only have dreamed of attaining the kind of readership in his lifetime that Banfield's books achieved in his. Still, Thoreau also says his reason for writing is to satisfy the curiosity of his readers: "I should not obtrude my affairs so much on the notice of my readers if very particular inquiries had not been made by my townsmen concerning my mode of life" (4).

Both books begin with a description of the origins of their authors' experiments in living apart from society. But while Thoreau delays his narrative

to lay the philosophical foundations for the rest of the book in "Economy," Banfield does not go to such great lengths. After a first chapter entitled "In the Beginning," in which he recounts the particular details of establishing a residence, he devotes a chapter to "A Plain Man's Philosophy." In it, as the title suggests, he extols the simple life, and he covers several of the same topics Thoreau deals with in "Economy."

Once they have retreated from society, one of the first questions both authors must answer is deciding what truly are the necessities of life. As one might expect, they are very few—fewer for Banfield than for Thoreau. For Thoreau, "The necessities of life for man in this climate may . . . be distributed under the several heads of Food, Shelter, Clothing, and Fuel" (12). For Banfield, "Our essentials would . . . be—shelter, something to eat and a 'little' to wear. Fire is included under 'something to eat,' for it is absolutely unnecessary for warmth" (37).

Regarding the necessity of shelter, both authors describe the process of house building (and *My Tropic Isle* even contains a photograph of the finished product). Thoreau digs his cellar, obtains his boards and nails, fells some pine trees with his borrowed axe, and erects his own dwelling in the span of about six pages, with the chimney building and the plastering described later as the cold weather is setting in. Banfield, more modestly, goes into detail only about the building of the kitchen, which he allows is the only section of their dwelling he put up single-handedly. "In the designing of the bungalow," he remarks, "two essentials were supreme, cost and comfort—minimum of cost, maximum of comfort. Aught else was as nothing" (23). Both fell trees for lumber, with Thoreau also obtaining boards from an Irishman's shanty and letting them warp straight in the sun. However, as Sherman Paul notes, "The essential frame of his house came directly from nature, as did the stones and sand for his chimney" (325). And in constructing their house and garden, Banfield is able to make use of driftwood in addition to the lumber produced from the local trees.

Both too build some of the furniture to put into their new homes. Thoreau presents the reader with a complete inventory of his household goods, the point being he can make do with so little that it can be accounted for in a short list, and Banfield goes into some detail about the building of a simple chair. The transitional sentence between "In the Beginning" and "A Plain Man's Philosophy" reads, "May be you are ashamed at the quantity of mind the dull article of furniture has absorbed; but there are other reflections—homely as well as philosophic" (27). I detect here some echoes of his predecessor. Besides containing a Thoreauvian pun, the sentence also expresses a point that Thoreau makes about his daily activities, such as hoeing beans, and with his story about the artist of Kouroo: not only is time spent attentively doing an activity well its own reward, it also conveys a spiritual benefit to the laborer.

Both are more humorous on the matter of clothing. As Thoreau states, "beware of all enterprises that require new clothes, and not rather a new wearer of

clothes" (23). Both decry the tendency of people to follow mere fashion in adorning themselves rather than being practical, with Thoreau observing that "perhaps we are led oftener by the love of novelty, and a regard for the opinions of men . . . than by true utility" (21) and Banfield declaring "I will never be content to be a supernumerary to my clothes" (33). Of course, on Dunk Island one can make do with fewer clothes than in the Massachusetts woods, so the shedding of clothes to the bare minimum becomes for Banfield also a matter of exposing oneself to the "purifying air" (69)—a matter of health as well as one of economy.

As for diet, "I have learned," states Thoreau, "that it would cost incredibly little trouble to obtain one's necessary food, even in this latitude; that a man may use as simple a diet as the animals, and yet retain health and strength" (61). Banfield also relies on the local environment for fruit and seafood, though they keep some goats for milk. "Delicate as well as wholesome and nutritious food is ours at so little cost that our debt to smiling Nature, if she kept records and tendered her accounts, would be somewhat embarrassing" (37-38).

Although both are abstainers from stimulating or intoxicating drink, Banfield is positively sybaritic compared to Thoreau:

> What more wholesome and pleasant a dish than pawpaw beaten to mush, saturated with the juice of lime, sweetened with sugar, and made fantastic with spices? What more enticing than stewed mango—golden and syrupy—with junket white as marble; or fruit salad compact of pineapple, mango, pawpaw, granadilla, banana, with lime juice and powdered sugar? (37)

Not for Banfield is the self-denying Thoreau of the "Higher Laws" chapter. He delights in the sensory stimulation provided by life on Dunk, and that includes the sense of taste. Mashed pawpaws instead of hoe-cakes, bananas instead of beans—though the founding principles are the same, the environmental differences, not to mention the temperamental differences of the authors, make for different reading experiences. To be fair, however, Thoreau does have his indulgent moments as well, as at the beginning of "Solitude": "This is a delicious evening, when the whole body is one sense, and imbibes delight through every pore" (129).

In his journal, Thoreau remarks, "One might at first expect that the earth would bear its best men within the tropics, where vegetation is most luxuriant and there is the most heat. But the temperate zone is found to be the most favorable to the growth and ripening of men" (334). His "growth and ripening" is evident in the slow unfolding of *Walden*, as opposed to the less concentrated and more episodic organization of Banfield's book. Interestingly, Thoreau here also prefigures the white Australian concern that the European race would degenerate in the tropics. Banfield dismisses this fear, believing that the sun is a source of life rather than a debilitating force.

Despite their disdain for seeking riches, both authors think themselves wealthy in their way, since they feel that they have found the "true gold." For Thoreau, "a man is rich in proportion to the number of things he can afford to let alone" (82). But later he admits, "I was rich, if not in money, in sunny hours and summer days, and spent them lavishly" (192). In the third chapter of *My Tropic Isle*, "Much Riches in a Little Room," Banfield makes light of the rumor that they decided to move to Dunk because gold had been discovered on the island; he admits that riches are there, but not of the material kind: "we get more out of the life of incredible folly than the wise who think of gold and little else but gold" (43). Here Banfield and Thoreau converge in their delight and their finding of value the study of their natural surroundings, freed from the daily grind of office or factory. Banfield declares that "The freedom from care, the vague sense of selfish property in the whole scheme of Nature, the delicious discovery of the virtues of solitude, the loveliness of this most gay and youthful earth, and the tones of the pleasant-voiced and often surly sea fill me with joy and embellish hope" (47-48).

Both books evidence what Lawrence Buell calls the "aesthetics of relinquishment":

> What distinguishes *Walden* and other epics of voluntary simplicity from most traditional narrative plots . . . is that the arrangement of its environmental furniture into linear corridors through which the protagonist strides becomes less important than what Thoreau suggestively calls deliberateness: the intensely pondered contemplation of characteristic images and events and gestures that take on a magical resonance beyond their normal importance now that conditions of life have been simplified and the protagonist freed to appreciate how much more matters than normally seems to matter. (152-53)

Most obviously, their relinquishment of goods enables them to feel themselves rich in other ways. Not so obviously, perhaps, both engage in a relinquishment of the self that comes across as an identification with the natural world.

To illustrate Buell's point, I find the most apparent parallels between the two books in the "Sounds" chapter of *Walden* and the "Silences" chapter of *My Tropic Isle*, which is preceded by one of the epigraphs from Thoreau—from the "Friday"' chapter of *A Week*: "Who has not hearkened to Her infinite din?" (331), with "Her" referring to silence. In both, the authors reveal how attuned to one's natural surroundings one can become when removed from society, how one can become sensitive to what Thoreau terms "the language which all things and events speak without metaphor" (*Walden* 111). Or as Banfield puts it, "Free alike from the clatter of pastimes and the creaks and groans of labour, this region discovers acute sensibility to sound" (49). It is not just the sounds of the animal life, which both authors comment upon; it is also what Thoreau calls the "vibration of the

universal lyre" (*Walden* 123) created by Concord church bells at a distance or on Dunk by

> the thud of glossy blue quondongs on the soft floor of the jungle, the clicking of a discarded leaf as it fell from the topmost twigs down through the strata of foliage, the bursting of a seed-pod, the patter of rejects from the million pink-fruited fig overhanging the beach, the whisper of leaves, the faint squeak where interlocked branches fret each other unceasingly, the sigh of phantom zephyrs too elusive to be felt. (51)

Both authors are good listeners, able to quiet themselves and attend to the sense impressions impinging upon them.

In particular, both books are full of the sounds of birds. *Walden* is populated by owls, loons, thrushes, chickadees, geese, blue jays, and partridges; *My Tropic Isle* by pigeons cooing and scrub fowl scratching. In the chapter "Reading to Music," Banfield tells of having his reading interrupted by a low sound of unknown origin, which he finally traces to a flock of nutmeg (Torresian imperial) pigeons three quarters of a mile away (88-89). Once he discovers the source, he reflects on the ability of low-frequency sound waves to carry over long distances, just as Thoreau uses his observations to generalize about natural laws (as he does, for instance, in his measurements of the ponds, though in that case there are spiritual dimensions as well). In neither case is it simply description for the sake of description; there is almost always an accompanying sense of discovery.

Also, both authors share their houses with animals. Thoreau has wasps beneath the roof, mice and squirrels under the floor, and moles in the cellar; Banfield tells of having to share their first hut with bats, which he welcomed until snakes discovered a new and easy source of prey (21-22). In a famous passage, Thoreau describes how a mouse "ran up my clothes, and along my sleeve, and round and round the paper which held my dinner, while I kept the latter close, and played at bo-peep with it" (226). Banfield tells of standing in a warm sea in a reverie: "a little friendly skate . . . had snoodled beside me, its transparent shovel-snout half buried in the sand. Immune from the opiate of the sea, though motionless, with wide, watery-yellow eyes, it gazed upon me as a fascinated child might upon a strange shape, and as I raised my hand in salutation wriggled off, less afraid than curious" (78). Both Thoreau's mouse and Banfield's skate are presented in terms of human children, and both authors presumably tell their stories as evidence of their own acceptance as part of the local environment by the native creatures.

One other obvious parallel between the two books is the proximity of their authors to water. Banfield lives on an island surrounded by the Pacific, Thoreau on the edge of a pond surrounded by hills, but both focus much of their attention on the watery element. Thoreau begins every day by bathing in the pond; "that,"

he says, "was a religious exercise, and one of the best things I did" (88). Banfield waxes poetic about a particular experience of bathing in the warm waters of the ocean: "in bathing something more is comprehended than mere physical pleasure. It touched and tingled a refined aesthetic emotion, an enlightened consciousness of the surroundings, remote from gross bodily sensations. For the time being one was immersed, not in heated salt water only but in the purifying essence of the scene" (76). As with the heightened sense of hearing created by solitude, in both cases the simple act of bathing takes on a more exalted significance. Thoreau speaks of the morning being to the day as spring is to the year, and the daily bath in the pond is a sort of monastic ritual enabling him to participate in daily renewal. For Banfield, the bath is part of the sensual delights provided by life on a tropical island; in this case, the experience produces a trance-like effect, transmuting his perceptions of his surroundings but also in the end being ultimately a renewing experience.

For Banfield, the sun is also a source of renewing energy. He devotes an entire chapter to "His Majesty the Sun." While today's sun-worshippers are cautioned to slather on sunscreen with maximum SPF, Banfield revels in the sunshine, and he presents it, as with Thoreau's bath, in terms of self-purification:

> Let the sun scorch the skin and blister it until it peels, and scorches and peels again, and scorches and peels alternately until, having no more dominion over the flesh, it tinctures the very blood and transmutes mere ruddiness to bronze. Thereafter you know not forever the pallor of the street, for have you not the gold of the sun in your blood and his iron in your bones? (71-72)

Though used in a playful sense, the phrase "no more dominion over the flesh" hints at a spiritual improvement as well as a physical purging.

Although Thoreau does state that even in late autumn he would rather find a sunny spot and be warmed naturally than stay inside near a fire, his is the sun of the temperate zone. At the end of the "Bean Field" chapter, he notes how his crop means no more to the sun than do the weeds and trees and grasses: "We are wont to forget that the sun looks on our cultivated fields and on the prairies and forests without distinction. They all reflect and absorb his rays alike, and the former make but a small part of the glorious picture which he beholds in his daily course" (166). While both authors personify the sun, Thoreau's Sol is a more philosophical fellow who does his job while caring little for the wishes of humankind. Banfield, on the other hand, does no less than give him part of the credit for the recovery of his health: "to the superexcellence of the air on the island, to the tonic of the sea, and to the graciousness of his Majesty the Sun—in whose radiance I have gloried—do I owe, perhaps, salvation from that which tributary friends in their meed of tenderness predicted—an untimely grave" (67-68).

Thus, both authors are sun-worshippers in their way, and for both the sun is an essential element in their projects of self-renewal. At Dunk, the renewal is of both physical and emotional health. At Walden, Thoreau was able to reconnect with the spring, to "endeavor," in Sherman Paul's words, "to find the way back to the golden age" (256). Arthur Christy analyzes the concept of self-renewal in *Walden* in terms of parallels with Eastern philosophies: "the Hindu yogi wrapt in his contemplations is not a far cry from the picture Thoreau gives of himself sitting in his sunny doorway lost in reverie, oblivious of time from sunrise till noon, oblivious even of the songs of birds" (221).

Of course, the sun is also directly responsible for the melting railroad bank of "Spring." It is no less than the source of energy that animates the natural world: "I am affected as if in a peculiar sense I stood in the laboratory of the Artist who made the world and me,—had come to where he was still at work, sporting on this bank, and with excess of energy strewing his fresh designs about" (306).

To some extent the natural world provides for both a source of philosophical reflections. But Thoreau, in *Walden* at least, still usually looks at nature with a Transcendentalist gaze. Banfield, although he extols equally a life of renunciation, seems to delight more in the enjoyment of nature for its own sake rather than as a source of instruction. While Heseltine describes Banfield's debt to Romanticism, he acknowledges that the Beachcomber "was, nevertheless, capable of recording natural data with real accuracy and thoroughness" (66). Banfield the "cheerful disciple" is, like Thoreau, a discerning observer and naturalist. With Thoreau, one can savor the taste of huckleberries, but a predisposition to turn observations to philosophical account may sometimes detract from the reader's sense of open and spontaneous enjoyment of nature. Call it cheerfulness, perhaps, that quality that makes reading Banfield enjoyable, though too much at once can be cloying. Banfield's tone is one of almost uniform affability, while Thoreau's is much more complex. It could be the difference between the journalist and the philosopher. Or perhaps it is the difference between the tropics and the temperate zone.

Maybe the difference between the two can best be illustrated with a matched pair of quotations. Thoreau's comes from the concluding chapter of *Walden*. In it, he reiterates the basic tenet of the philosophy he set forth in his first chapter, but with a twist: "In proportion as he simplifies his life, the laws of the universe will appear less complex, and solitude will not be solitude, nor poverty poverty, nor weakness weakness. If you have built your castles in the air, your work need not be lost; that is where they should be. Now put the foundations under them" (324). Part of the work of *Walden* is Thoreau's foundation building.

A similar passage occurs in Banfield's "A Plain Man's Philosophy," where he is expounding upon the joys of living what he calls, in a phrase emphasizing his renunciation of civilization, the "unartificial life":

> In such a scene would it not have been wicked to have delivered ourselves over to any cranky, miserly economy or to any distortion or affectation of thrift? Had fortune smiled, her gifts would have been sanely appreciated, for our ideas of comfort and the niceties of life are not cramped, neither are they to be gauged by the narrow gape of our purse. Our castles are built in the air, not because earth has no fit place for their foundations, but for the sufficient reason that the wherewithal for the foundations was lacking. When a sufficiency of the world's goods has been obtained to satisfy animal wants for food and clothing and shelter, happiness depends, not upon the pleasures but the pleasantness of life; not upon the possession of a house full of superfluities but in the attainment of a restraining grace. (31-32)

Here is Banfield at his most Thoreauvian. The foundations of which Thoreau speaks are composed of practical living and self-sufficiency; those Banfield ridicules are the financial foundations the average reader might want to acquire before embarking on a similar experiment. In fact, Thoreau pokes fun at those who tell him they would like to adopt his mode of life, if first they could acquire enough capital (71). They have missed the point as much as those who can't believe anyone would voluntarily move to Dunk Island unless there were gold there. By invoking "the attainment of a restraining grace," balanced against the acquisition of unnecessary material possessions, Banfield makes clear the extent of his discipleship.

In July 1998 I took a trip out to Dunk, partly to see the sights, but mainly as a kind of Banfield pilgrimage. The epitaph on the stone above Banfield's grave bears the same quotation from *Walden* that serves as the epigraph for *Confessions of a Beachcomber*. I could not help but wonder as I stood there along with several other tourists, all of us with cameras in hand, what Banfield would make of Dunk Island now, with its airstrip and an exclusive resort catering to international travelers. To ask the question Thoreau asks just prior to the passage quoted on Banfield's gravestone, "Why should we be in such desperate haste to succeed, and in such desperate enterprises?" (326). A number of commentators have remarked upon how Walden pond has changed since Thoreau's day, but while people still make pilgrimages to Walden out of homage to the author, Banfield, whose life and philosophy might serve as a reproof to those who now partake of the delights of his tropic isle, has been, aside from the grave site, pretty much effaced from the scene.

In short, many people visit Walden because of Thoreau, while most visit Dunk because of Dunk. I was more than willing to criticize the changes development has brought to the island; in the words of the Eagles' song "The Last Resort," "Call

some place paradise, kiss it good-bye" (Henley and Frye). However, as Thoreau says, "The fault finder will find faults even in paradise" (*Walden* 328). In these days of ecotourism, perhaps exploring the island, most of which after all enjoys some protection, could make tourists aware of what is happening to Australia's tropical ecosystems, something of which perhaps both Thoreau and Banfield might approve.

As for the two books, *Walden* of course enjoys classic status, in part because it is now seen as the founding text of the genre of nature writing in America. *My Tropic Isle* is mostly of historical interest. As I noted above, the differences are those between the philosopher and the journalist. While Thoreau attempts to come to terms with the self in nature and interrogates America's commercial culture, Banfield presents us with descriptions of curiosities and idyllic scenes. Although I think Banfield was clearly influenced by Thoreau, the book is hardly derivative. The influences are most clearly seen in Banfield's choice of Thoreau quotations for epigraphs, but I think we can also trace them in the structure of the early chapters of *My Tropic Isle*. Beyond that, I would say that it is more a case of convergent thinking resulting from similarity of circumstance and consequently from Buell's aesthetics of relinquishment. Banfield did not decide to move to Dunk because of his reading of *Walden*, but once there, he could hardly have escaped recognizing their similar situations, a fact he acknowledges at the beginning of *Confessions of a Beachcomber*.

That said, to acknowledge, as Green correctly does, that Banfield is no Thoreau is not all negative, since the two reading experiences are different: it can be as delightful to share a sensuous dip in a warm tropical sea as to fish philosophically with Thoreau on Walden Pond.

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Leslie Perrin Wilson has been Curator of Special Collections at the Concord Free Public Library since 1996. She writes on Concord-related literary and historical topics for a variety of publications, including the *Concord Journal*, which features her column "Historic Concord," and the ezine *Concord Magazine* (<http://www.concordma.com/magazine>www.concordma.com/magazine). She is committed to dispelling the notion that Concord history has been fully explored, and to making local history as accessible as possible to a broad audience.

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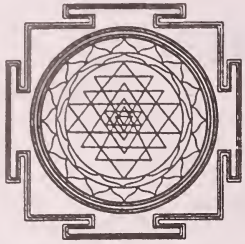

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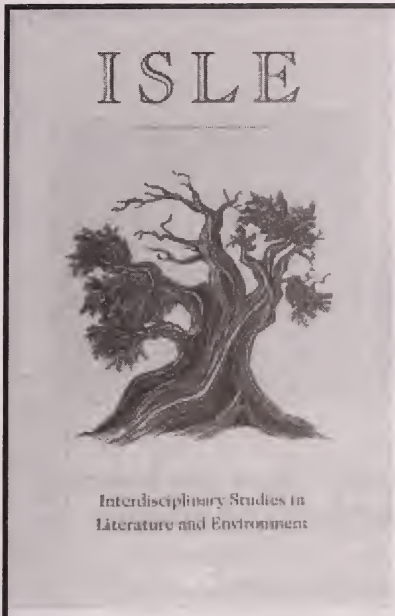

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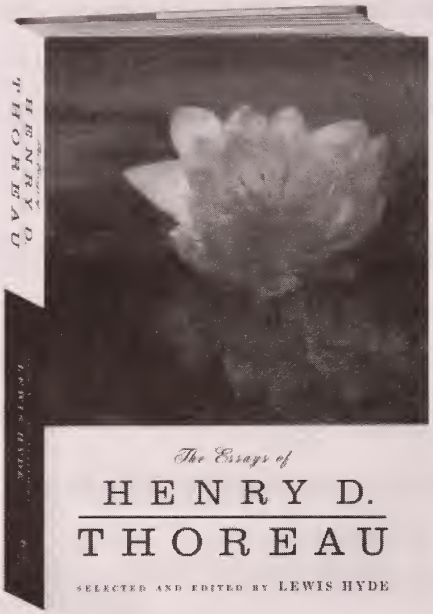

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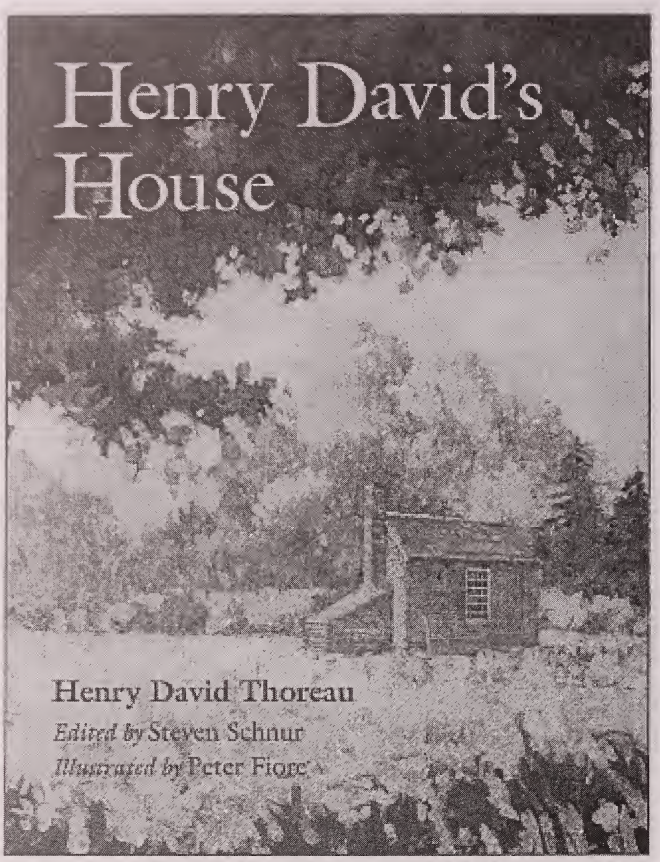

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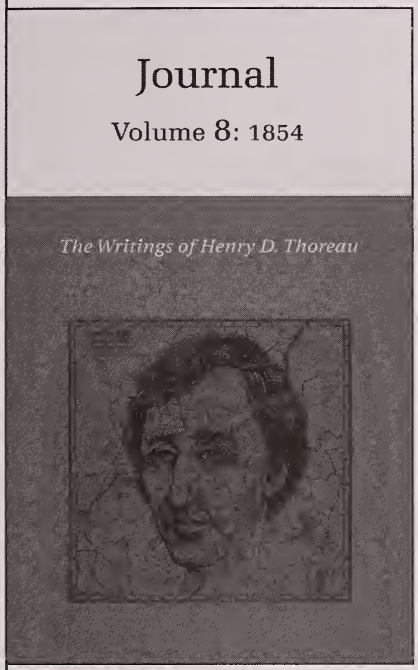

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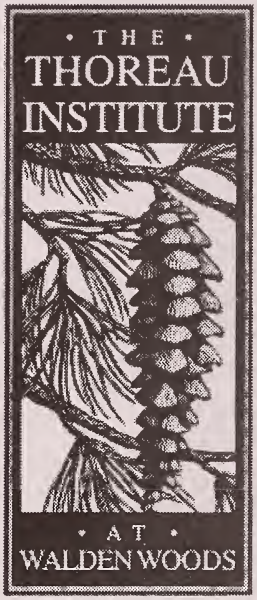

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